PASS
THE
TORCH
ACT I

PASS THE TORCH
ACT 1 (DEMO)

The demo for the first of three Acts in a *Lancer* narrative campaign for pilots starting at LL0.

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Special Thanks to my Players
Birb, Dublin, Dusty, Janus, Linhares

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Demo Version: 1.0

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *Pass the Torch,* a campaign for the *Lancer* tabletop RPG system. This campaign takes place more than a millennium after the timeline laid out in the *Lancer Core Rulebook,* building on its historical foundations.

In this grim future, the Milky Way burns with a mysterious nanite swarm, the Argent Plague, which has erased worlds and systems off the starmap. Under the weight of the Plague and a zealous insurrection, Union has stumbled, and its supremacy is challenged by the rising power of the Annorum Empyrea. The fragments of humanity grapple over ever-diminishing resources, clinging to life. Even the stars themselves are being consumed by the Plague, their lights dimming along with humanity's hope.

Then a torch ignites in the sea of guttering candles. An impossibly titanic planet, Beacon, appears beyond the edge of frontier space. Forward scouts announce that it is free from the Plague, and that its scale could make it a viable refuge for humanity; a miracle made manifest.

Now, the galaxy holds its breath as the blink gate to Beacon nears completion.

Yet the planet is not the haven it seems. It bears a history of dark deeds, of loss, and of vengeance ascendant. The players shall have their chance to etch their story onto this new world, uncover the mysteries at its heart, and shape the future of the galaxy.

This demo includes:

- A narrative campaign for new or experienced players that will take them from License Level 0 to 2 across two of the three available missions.
- Two 'Paths', or narrative routes for the player characters (PCs) to follow, aligning them with either the Annorum or Union.
- A description of the setting, including the historical timeline, factions, characters, and locations, all designed and organized for use by the Gamemaster (GM).
- Combats complete with **full battle maps** (in separate files), sitreps, enemy forces, and recommended tactics for the NPCs controlled by the GM.
- A **Player's Guide** (in a separate file) with spoiler-free history and context for the setting, as well as descriptions of the available narrative Paths.
- New NPCs and a new NPC template for GMs, a new sitrep, as well as exotic gear and three new mech frames for players.

PREPARATION

Pass the Torch is intended for groups of 3-5 players, plus a GM, though you can adjust the campaign to meet your group's needs. The GM will require a copy of the *Lancer Core Rulebook.* Players will need to create their player characters (PCs), including both pilots and their mechs. Digital management of characters, mechs, and encounters can be done with *Lancer's* companion app, Comp/Con.

No other supplements are strictly necessary, though there are references made to and inspiration drawn from the *Karrakin Trade Baronies* and *The Long Rim* setting books, along with a great deal of history and subject matter from *No Room for a Wallflower, Act 1.* It can be helpful to have these supplements available for greater context about factions and terms, though they are not required.

GM & PLAYER SAFETY

This campaign covers topics that can be fraught at the best of times, and at worst, harmful to the GM and the players. The book approaches these topics with respect, but it does not blunt the sharp edges of war and genocide. The GM should talk with their players prior to play, during session zero, and throughout the campaign to ensure that everyone is comfortable with the occurring events and scenes. The GM should also check in with themselves to make sure they're comfortable with running the game as it stands.

The following topics and themes appear in this campaign:

- War
- Death
- Violence against children
- Grief
- Suicide
- Genocide
- Cloning
- Memory editing
- Sex work

If anyone at the table is uncomfortable with certain themes, then the GM can change the events to suit the group. Please make use of the following tools for GM & player safety:

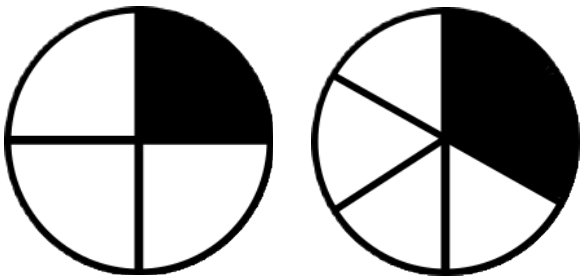
- **X-Card:** http://tinyurl.com/x-card-rpg
- **Script Change Toolbox:** https://briebeau.com/thoughty/script-change
- **RPG Safety Toolkit:** http://bit.ly/ttrpgsafetytoolkit

CLOCKS

Throughout *Pass the Torch,* the GM will be instructed to create 'clocks'. A clock is a tool for visually tracking progress towards a narrative goal or consequence, or otherwise measuring the status of gameplay factors. Originating from the *Apocalypse World* game, clocks are helpful for GMs and players to see the current state of the game, to generate tension, and to bring resolution to scenarios.

CLOCK APPEARANCE

A clock looks much like it sounds; a circle with multiple segments like an equally distributed pie chart. They will typically have anywhere between 3 and 12 segments, and may start empty (entirely unticked) or with some segments already filled depending on what it's tracking. When a segment is 'ticked', fill in or mark one of the pie slices. To 'untick' a segment, erase a mark. Hope you didn't use a pen!



CLOCK NAMES

Clocks are named based on the game element they're tracking. For example, if the clock is tracking the PC's goal of breaking a strong pillar, it might be called **Pillar Demolished.** Clocks can be created as they become applicable, and freely discarded when they become irrelevant for the game.

CLOCK TYPES

Most clocks will fall into three groups: **goal, threat,** and **status.** These clocks might also be used as **racing clocks,** or be **hidden** from players.

GOAL CLOCKS

This clock tracks the PCs as they make progress toward a goal. In the case of the **Pillar Demolished** clock, as the PCs make successful **checks** to cause structural damage to the pillar, the clock's segments are ticked. When the clock is filled, the pillar is destroyed. Goal clocks can also be used to track long-term projects, such as those worked on during downtime.

THREAT CLOCKS

Clocks may also represent danger. For example, If the PCs want to do something before enemy forces reach the scene, then any delay from consequences on failed **checks** might tick the **Enemy Arrival** clock. Consequences from **risky** and **heroic** rolls may also cause the clock to be ticked. When the clock is filled, enemies appear and engage the PCs.

STATUS CLOCKS

These are special clocks that are not typically tied to a given scene or mission. They often represent and track less tangible factors, such as a faction's strength, a countdown timer, or a special type of resource. Depending on the clock, filling it or emptying it may or may not have an immediate effect. Some status clocks are tracked across multiple Acts of the campaign.

RACING CLOCKS

In tense scenarios, the GM can use opposing 'goal' and 'threat' clocks. For example, the PCs must fill the **Pillar Demolished** goal clock to break the pillar before the **Enemy Arrival** threat clock is filled and enemies intervene to stop them.

If a **risky check** is rolled and the result is a success with consequences, and that leads to both the goal and the threat clock filling simultaneously, then resolving it is up to the GM. It's recommended not to negate the success of filling the goal clock. Instead use the filled threat clock to introduce complications. If this occurred in the previous example, perhaps the PCs do manage to break the pillar, but achieving future objectives will be more difficult with arriving enemies. Or perhaps the next combat scene will feature additional enemy reinforcements.

HIDDEN CLOCKS

The campaign will sometimes require that a clock be kept hidden and tracked privately by the GM. In these cases, do not tell players the purpose of the clock. Only tell them each time the clock is ticked. Tell the players it is being ticked even if the clock is already filled in order to keep the players uncertain about the status of the clock. The campaign may or may not call for the hidden clock to eventually be revealed to the players.

CLOCKS IN THE CAMPAIGN

Whenever a clock is called for in the campaign, it will include a name and the number of segments, along with the clock's purpose. The text will also describe when you should tick or untick a clock.

The GM should not be constrained by the guidelines within the text. If the PCs act in a way that would narratively affect a clock, then tick or untick segments accordingly, even if the method doesn't match the standard means of doing so. Reward clever choices and ingenuity (or lunacy) as appropriate, or punish the PCs (not the players) for screwing things up in innovative ways.

Clocks are a tool, and their creation and removal should not be limited to only events described in the campaign; they should be utilized whenever the GM sees fit. This may especially be necessary if the PCs venture off the beaten path of the campaign.

DEMO STRUCTURE

This demo for the *Pass the Torch* campaign includes three missions. There are two Prologue missions, one each for the Annorum and Union Paths, and one mission for both Paths. The **missions** are subdivided into narrative **beats,** tactical **combats,** and the **downtime** between missions.

PATHS

The game is split into two narrative Paths for the players to choose from. This choice must be made before the campaign starts. The Paths are: the **Annorum Path** and the **Union Path.** Each Path aligns the player characters (PCs) with the respective major factions of the Annorum or Union.

The chosen Path will determine which of the two the Prologue missions the PCs will undertake. It also affects future mission choice, and will lead to different events, combats, and more. While most missions are shared between Paths, some missions are for PCs on specific Paths.

The *Pass the Torch - Player's Guide* contains spoiler-free descriptions of the Paths to allow the players to make their choice of Path. It's important to note that the PCs are not trapped on a Path; they can switch, should the narrative lead to it. This may occur in the aftermath of a falling out, a betrayal of trust, or just a change in perspective.

The GM should not try to railroad the players on a Path they can't tolerate. At the same time, if the players attempt to forge a route that is completely out of line with the missions and format of this campaign, then the GM has a few options.

Pause the game and speak to the players out-of-character about the format of the campaign structure, laying out the alternative Path as an available option if they don't like the current one. If they don't like either Path, the GM can…

- …end the campaign and play something else! Don't run a game you aren't comfortable with, especially if your original intent was to follow a campaign in a setting with the story already laid out for you.
- …tell your own story with your players using the characters, locations, and other setting information from the book, along with details you create yourself! This can be a lot of work, but it can also be very rewarding. Don't let this book dictate the only way for you to have fun.

ANNORUM PATH

The Annorum Empyrea sees Beacon as a planet of immense potential, and it does not dare allow Union to seize it first. And so, Anno Tyrus Empyrea sends Armada 9 Khayradin to investigate and establish a forward operating base. He has even sent his disgraced son, Prince Altair Empyrea, to see it done.

However, under the Annorum's pomp and grandeur simmers a conspiracy. A secretive cabal, the House of Thorns, intends to remove the Anno from his throne and end the line of succession by any means. They have already assassinated the Anno's Royal Consort. Marshal Samuel Ludov, the man in command of the Annorum's forces on Beacon, and the famed kavaliere Lady Galea Vebelle are both members of the Thorns.

In comparison to the Union Path, the Annorum Path features the following:

- More focus on intrigue and royal politics.
- Missions that are more mechanically and narratively complex, and more open-ended.
- The option for an alternative Thorny Path, where the PCs join forces with the House of Thorns and perform great and terrible deeds to depose the Anno.

PROLOGUE MISSION

For the Annorum Path's Prologue, the PCs will take on **Mission: Cloak and Dagger.** In this mission, the PCs are to escort a VIP and her bodyguard to a remote spaceport on the desert planet of Tilimsan. Once there, a ship is to take them to Beacon.

The VIP is Princess Soleni, the rebellious younger sister of Prince Altair. She is safeguarded by her Vigilant, Nora Stonegate. Together they scheme to sneak off and join Altair on Beacon. The route off-planet has been compromised by the House of Thorns.

DEMO NOTE

Please note that this Demo does not include many sections that will be in the full release of future Acts. It primarily includes sections that will be relevant for the Demo itself, though certain details about the setting will be included for your worldbuilding and reference purposes.

Sections and passages not immediately relevant for running the Demo will be marked with a Demo Note, have specific lines of text ~~crossed out~~, or simply be **Redacted.**

ANNORUM BACKGROUNDS

The GM should collaborate with the players to create a background for their group. Here are some potential backgrounds to be used directly or for inspiration:

- The PCs are noble kuirassers and members of a house company. They're either backed by a minor noble house, or are a small part of a larger deployment by a major house's banner company. A woman displayed an official warrant that authorizes her to commandeer the PCs for a mission.
- The PCs are mostly or entirely ignoble members of a free company, a legal and regulated entity similar to a mercenary company, but more romanticized. Substantial funds have been provided to secure the free company's services.
- The PCs are struggling to gain fame and recognition as a team of amateur pankrati, or mechanized gladiators that duel for sport. Their agent promises them a job that takes them to Beacon, where they can make a name for themselves.
- The PCs are desperate ignobles trying to get off of Tilimsan, a planet slowly becoming uninhabitable due to its cooling sun. Their mechs might be retrofitted civilian models, salvaged from wreckages, or used previously in banditry. They're approached by a woman who also wants off Tilimsan, and who has a ship chartered.
- The PCs are employed by a group outside the Annorum, such as a Long Rim Enterprise, a corporation, an interstellar merchant's guild, or some other faction. Money comes through hushed channels and the PCs are sent on a mission. They are to perform their duties and, more importantly, represent the group's interests on Beacon.

The PCs may start as noble or ignoble, and not all need be one or the other; there may be a mix of the two. This factor may set different tones for the campaign, as Annorum characters treat the PCs as either peers or subordinates.

Regardless, the PCs do not start as kavalieres (similar to medieval knights); their star has not yet risen. There are opportunities later in the campaign for becoming kavalieres, and for ignoble PCs to become ennobled.

UNION PATH

The Union cannot afford to let the Annorum Empyrea exploit Beacon first. CentComm has sent two of its representatives, Royce Merrick and Vodena Park, to lead the expeditionary 14th Fleet to Beacon. Royce was put in charge of military matters, with Berke as his enforcer, while Vodena was selected to handle colony and civilian management. Commander (soon to be Admiral) Aleksey Torus and Lieutenant Emma Bailey are officers in Union's fleet.

At the heart of Union is a power struggle between three partisan political parties. Royce represents the hawkish Revivalists, who want a more direct and focused war with the Annorum. Vodena represents the Coalitionists, who believe that Union should work toward beneficial cooperation, or at least peaceful coexistence, with the Annorum. The Autonomists are the third party who desire no change to the current status quo and its financial benefits; they are unrepresented on Beacon, but their agenda will throw chaos into the mix.

While the Revivalists seek to escalate war against the Annorum, they are generally content to do so through political channels and jingoistic rhetoric. Royce Merrick's personal vendetta against the Annorum has him planning unilateral and catastrophic means of finally achieving a permanent end to the centuries-long war.

In comparison to the Annorum, the Union Path features the following:

- More focus on war, military life, and factional politics.
- Missions that are more linear and straightforward.
- The option for an alternative Vengeful Path, where the PCs strive to violently subjugate the Annorum and put an end to the war at any cost.

PROLOGUE MISSION

In the Union Path's Prologue, the PCs will embark on **Mission: Plagueship.** In this mission, a Union battlegroup en route to Beacon is attacked by a stealthy, smaller Annorum naval group. Simultaneously, the ship comes under internal attack by a mercenary group hired by the Autonomists, who want Royce dead.

The Autonomists correctly believe Royce will jeopardize profits to be made from Beacon by seeking war with the Annorum. The PCs must clash with the mercenary boarding party aboard the *UNS-BB Chekhov* and restore communications in order to avert a catastrophic naval defeat.

UNION BACKGROUNDS

The GM should collaborate with the players to create a background for their group. Here are some potential backgrounds to be used directly or for inspiration:

- The PCs are newly minted pilot cadets fresh out of the Union naval academies. The veteran pilots aboard the ship are supposed to mentor the group and show them the ropes before they get into serious combat. Unfortunately, things don't shake out that way.
- The PCs are members of a capital ship's staff or passengers: security guards, cooks, janitors, mechanics, scholars, tourists, and so on. While they may have never stepped foot in a mech, they still answer the call for courageous individuals to salvage a dire situation.
- The PCs are members of Union's Department of Justice and Human Rights (DoJ/HR) who are sent on a critical assistance mission to Beacon. The department foresees the need for humanitarian aid and intervention in the planet's future, and needs boots on the ground.
- The PCs are part of an independent mercenary company of mech pilots. They've just signed on for a pricey long-term contract with Union for employment on Beacon. As is standard with every too-good-to-be-true contract, things immediately go sideways.
- The PCs are employed by a group outside Union, such as a Long Rim Enterprise, a corporation, an interstellar guild of merchants, or some other faction. They are hired as contractors by Union to serve as a semi-independent fighting force. They are to perform their duties and, more importantly, represent the group's interests on Beacon.

The PCs may start as marines directly within the chain of command, or as something else adjacent to the chain.

DIFFERENT PATHS

Having made the choice of a Path for the campaign, it is important to be able to distinguish the events of one Path from another. This section is intended to assist the GM in understanding where Paths converge or diverge.

PATH MARKERS

By default, the events of the campaign are assumed to occur for both Paths. The places where this is not the case are explicitly marked and color-coded for the specific path to which they apply. For the colorblind, section headers and markers are also differentiated with an underline or *italics.*

- **The color and format of the Annorum Path.**
- ***The color and format of the Union Path.***

PATH CHARACTERS

Some missions and scenes may involve different characters depending on the Path. For example, on the Annorum Path the PCs might meet Altair during a scene. On the Union Path, they would instead meet Berke.

The text color-codes and formats these Path-specific characters, and differentiates them with a forward slash: ' **/** '. By virtue of arriving first in the alphabet, Annorum Path characters always appear before Union Path characters.

The previous example would appear as follows:
Altair/*Berke*

THE ENEMY

Some missions involve the Annorum and Union working against each other, and are written to work for either Path. Passages in these missions will often refer to the 'Enemy' (capitalized). This is shorthand for the GM to reference the Path and their respective faction's enemy.

As in real life, who your Enemy is depends on your perspective:

- **Annorum Path:** The Enemy is Union.
- ***Union Path:*** The Enemy is the Annorum.

RUNNING THE CAMPAIGN

COMBAT

Missions and beats throughout the book will be interspersed with tactical combat. With some exceptions, combats are approximately designed in accordance with community guidelines based on the number of players, as follows:

- 1.5x - 2x player count in combined enemy turns, including enemies with multiple turns, such as **Elites**.
- 2x player count in combined enemy **Structure,** including enemies with multiple **Structure,** such as **Veterans**.
- No more than five NPC classes per combat.
- No more than 50% of enemy turns taken by **Striker** and **Artillery** NPC roles.

DIFFICULTY

Combat in *Pass the Torch* is designed to be challenging and complex. The campaign supports the defeat of the PCs. Rarely does a defeat mean the total annihilation of the group, though it may spell the death of one or more of its members, or other major setbacks.

Overcoming adversity is satisfying. However, suffering defeat after defeat may become frustrating, and we're here to have fun.

Every player group and every set of PCs are different. Numerous factors are at play here: your players' knowledge of Lancer, their tactical mindset, the optimizing of mech builds, the GM's own playstyle, and so on. The combination of these factors may result in combat that is either trivial or overwhelmingly difficult. Moreover, some groups may desire a more casual experience.

No one campaign can possibly support all tables. However, the GM can tailor the campaign to better suit their group. Among other possibilities, the following steps may be taken to adjust the difficulty of combats:

- Add/remove **Enemy Forces** and/or **Reinforcements.**
- Add/remove NPC templates and optional systems.
- Provide opportunities to scavenge or requisition **Repairs** or other **Reserves** between combats, potentially at the risk of ticking threat clocks.

TIERS

When listing NPC statistics, **Enemy Forces,** or **Reinforcements,** the tier of the NPC shall be listed. The shorthand used is **T1** for **Tier 1, T2** for **Tier 2,** and **T3** for **Tier 3.**

At their own discretion and peril, the GM may adjust the tiers of enemies up or down. This may be necessary if, for example, the PCs are starting the campaign higher than LL0.

TACTICAL SUPPLEMENTS

While this campaign book cannot include NPC classes and templates from other campaign books and supplements, the GM is under no such restrictions. They should feel free to modify or replace enemies with other NPC classes, such as *Wallflower's* **Strider** or **Spite.**

Additionally, *Lancer: Enhanced Combat* by Ralf Ziegler is highly recommended. The supplement rebalances the base book sitreps (while adding additional options), and effectively refines the Lancer combat experience.

RESTING

The campaign is balanced around the PCs getting opportunities to rest between each combat and receiving a **Full Repair** between each mission. In missions where the PCs are under time constraints, threat clocks tracking the situation will be ticked when they rest. This is not meant to punish the PCs or prevent them from resting, only to keep up the pressure.

While the *Lancer Core Rulebook* describes resting as requiring an hour of uninterrupted downtime, the GM should feel free to adjust this to fit the narrative for pacing purposes.

PLAYER MECHANICS

This section is all about the mechanics the players and PCs will utilize throughout the campaign. The GM should endeavor to teach the players each mechanic as the need arises for it in play.

THE SHIP

Beacon is a big planet. Traveling across it by land is not feasible. Instead, most travel will take place via starship, and many missions will assume the players are utilizing space travel.

At the beginning of Act 1, the PCs are granted access to a ship. The players should be encouraged to name it and customize their ship's aesthetics. The ship's model and type should be agreed upon by both the GM and PCs; a ground-capable small carrier, military transport shuttle, or landing freighter would be appropriate.

SHIP STATISTICS

Use the **Ship** template for an NPC. It's recommended to use the **Aegis** or **Support** NPC class as the basis for the ship. Players should be warned that if they bring their ship into combat or other dangerous situations, it is very possible for it to be destroyed, and for the people onboard to die. If the PCs exceed the limit of the **Transport** feature of the **Ship** template, it's recommended to either ignore the limitation, increase the size of the ship, or provide the PCs a second ship.

SHIP CAPABILITIES

A ship designed for carrying and deploying mechs would likely **have** at least the following features:

- Single-use drop pods for quickly deploying mechs into a warzone.
- Heavy duty zip-cables for attached mechs to swiftly descend, or rather less swiftly extract.
- Supplies and fuel for a two or three day mission. Fuel is likely to quickly run dry if extended time is spent hovering in a gravitational field, as opposed to floating in orbit.

The following features are what a ship in this campaign should probably **not have:**

- The facilities and printing capabilities to perform a **Full Repair.** Having this capability would grant the PCs a powerful resource advantage in some missions.
- The statistics of a PC mech or a powerful NPC. The ship should be vulnerable and not something the PCs want to put in danger, or else the GM will need to adjust some combats for what is essentially an additional PC.

SHIP PILOT

Every ship needs a pilot (and potentially some additional crew members), and the players have a few options:

- An **NPC** can fly the ship. The PCs' faction will provide a pilot. If an NPC pilot needs to make a roll for a **check** that involves piloting the ship, their bonus will depend on their tier: **2/3/4.** The NPC will start at **Tier 1** and advance tiers at the end of each Act. Some recruitable NPC pilots are considered **Expert Pilots**, and have higher bonuses.
- An **NHP** can fly the ship. If the PCs have access to an NHP through their licensing or talents but are not utilizing them in their mech, or have otherwise encountered and recruited an NHP, then a willing NHP can pilot the ship. If an NHP pilot needs to make a roll for a **check** that involves piloting the ship, their bonus will match the PCs **Grit** if the NHP is license/talent based. If not, the bonus is at the GM's discretion.
- A **PC** can fly the ship. This will work in some situations, but is not recommended as the sole solution, since the PC can't pilot the ship and their mech at the same time. Some missions will not have viable places to land during the mission, and autopilot comp/cons exist but are limited. A PC pilot can also have an NPC or NHP co-pilot who takes over for them while they're away.

SHOT DOWN

Should the PCs' ship be shot down or otherwise destroyed at any point, the lives of those aboard are imperiled.

A PC or an NPC pilot can attempt a **risky, difficult check**. They manage a safe landing on a success, a rough landing on a mixed success, or a catastrophic collision on a failure. Other PCs and NPCs aboard can make a single action (such as mounting a mech) or a **difficult check** to take shelter (or force another character into shelter) while the ship is careening out of control.

On a rough landing, mechs and dismounted or unsheltered characters on the ship take **5 AP kinetic damage.**

If a catastrophic collision occurs, the mechs onboard must succeed on a **Hull check**. On a failure, they take **1 structure damage.** On a success, they take **5 AP kinetic damage.** Dismounted PCs and NPCs that did not manage to take shelter are reduced to **0 HP.**

TRAVEL TIMES

Beacon is roughly 4 million kilometers across. For reference, you could fit over 30 million Cradles or 23 thousand Jupiters inside that volume. Of course, the actual volume of Beacon is far larger due to extraspatial technology, but the surface of Beacon alone is still titanic.

This makes meaningful ground travel near impossible over long distances. For example, traveling around the planet on the ground at 100 kilometers per hour without stops would take a little over 4.5 years. Thankfully, starships can shorten this time drastically, and starships outside the atmosphere can move deceptively fast with tolerable levels of acceleration.

Starships do not have the technology for handling acceleration via g-force negation. While that will change as Beacon's gravitational technology is studied and adapted, such things take time. Until that point, most human ships will only be able to accelerate to a point, measured in g-forces, before its passengers fall unconscious. Speeds beyond 2 g are typically only attempted by smaller ships; larger capital ships may sustain structural damage attempting to travel faster.

This may become relevant in missions where the clock is ticking and the PCs want to push the limits on how fast they can move.

FUN FACT
Accelerating at 6 g for about 14 hours equals roughly 1% the speed of light.

TRAVEL SPEEDS

This table shows examples of what multi-hour trips might do to a human under different g-forces. The benefits and drawbacks for **checks** to reach a destination quickly are described for each speed bracket.

Using these g-forces as reference for the speeds the PCs might travel across the planet, you can reference the **Estimated Time of Arrival** table for gauging travel times around Beacon. These times account for exiting the atmosphere, accelerating, turning the ship around to decelerate, then reentering the atmosphere.

SPEED	ACCURACY/ DIFFICULT	DESCRIPTION AND CONDITIONS
1 g	**+2 Difficulty**	Comfortable for most humans, except those used to lighter gravity.
2 g	**+1 Difficulty**	Uncomfortable for most humans. Any physical activity that involves moving and standing becomes difficult or even dangerous, requiring a **check.**
3-4 g	**No Effect**	Exhausting for most humans. With a modern hardsuit and/or appropriate medication, a trip at these speeds is tolerable. Physical activity requires a **difficult, risky check.** Extended ship travel at these speeds usually involves all passengers being immobilized in specialized chairs or beds.
5-6 g	**+1 Accuracy**	Incapacitating for most humans, even with modern aids. Without modern aids, these forces mean blackout and eventual death. Any physical activity requires a **heroic check.** For humans, enduring an extended journey at these speeds requires a **difficult check,** likely requiring triggers related to survival, medicine, or moving quickly. On a failure, the character is reduced to half **HP** (if not already lower) and is **Impaired** (along with any mech they pilot) until they rest.
7+ g	**+2 Accuracy**	These forces are tolerable for seconds, but for extended ship travel, humans will arrive as corpses. Some high-tech fluid g-tanks or gravity manipulation engines may be able to allow humans to survive these journeys, but they do not come standard on ships, and are difficult to acquire.

ESTIMATED TIME OF ARRIVAL

Measurements are in the fraction of Beacon's circumference (**C**) crossed during the travel. Optimal travel routes do not use gravitational orbits, as Beacon's gravity is too weak to keep a fast spaceship in its orbit past its initial acceleration. Instead, the fastest route is typically a wide ellipse.

This table is meant for the GM's reference for the relative time a trip around Beacon would take. It is not meant for hard tracking of hours with critical deadlines for missions and clocks, which are more nebulous for narrative flexibility.

SPEED	1/8 C	1/4 C	1/2 C
1 g	6 Hours	10 Hours	15 Hours
2 g	4 Hours	6 Hours	9 Hours
4 g	3 hours	5 Hours	7 Hours
6 g	2.5 hours	4 Hours	6 Hours

IDISH / SPIRITSPEAK

The Idaeans have left their mark scrawled across Beacon in the form of Idish writing and rare audio recordings. Written Idish appears like a series of lines in the shape of squared-off mazes that form semi-fractal branching patterns. Verbal Idish bears grammatical similarities to old Union dialect, though the words are otherwise very different, and the clicks and other phonemes are difficult for some mouths to form.

The Farseers have been studying Idish, which they call 'Spiritspeak', since they arrived on Beacon. They have the firmest grasp of the language on the planet; a fact they leverage to get lucrative contracts for translation work.

For this reason, the Farseers carefully guard their knowledge of Spiritspeak and will usually refuse to teach others the language. They make exceptions for those who have assisted them and shown themselves to be friends of the clan.

LANGUAGE LEVELS

This table describes each level of understanding of Idish, its associated **trigger** bonus, what it means for PCs, and some examples of potential sources for learning that level of the language. Higher level sources can also be used as sources for learning lower levels of Idish.

LEVEL	UNDERSTANDING	SOURCES
Level 1 (+2)	Knowledge of written Idish only. GMs may rule a **check** as **risky,** with consequences meaning the PC only gleans an incomplete translation, or the gist of the passage.	• A successful **check** to pull data from an Idaean console, such as the ones found in prefabricated housing. • ~~Kai Baker, if he is convinced to undertake the boring task of teaching.~~ • Dumpster Diving downtime activity.
Level 2 (+4)	Knowledge of written and verbal Idish. Even on a failed **check,** the PC will get the gist of a passage or speech. Farseer translators will typically be at this level.	• In payment for a great service or debt of honor from the Farseers. • ~~Orion's translator notes combined with a full recording of the engravings in the Hall of Remembrance.~~ • Dumpster Diving downtime activity.
Level 3 (+6)	Fluent in both written and verbal Idish. The PC no longer needs to make **checks** to translate. As a project, the PC may be able to create translator programs for other PCs to understand Idish.	• ~~Access to databanks in Artemis, Hades, or a similar major information hub.~~ • ~~Feltz the Historian will teach anyone who asks him.~~ • Personal tutelage by Grandpa Baker. • Dumpster Diving downtime activity.

One or more of the PCs can, and ideally should, learn the Idish language over the course of the campaign, since they will encounter many situations and locations involving it. They can do so if they take the **'Get Focused'** downtime action and have an adequate source to learn the next level of the language. Translating a written passage or speech can be done as a **check** only by characters who have at least the **Level 1** of Idish.

DOWNTIME ACTIONS

The PCs have access to the two additional downtime actions: **Serve the Faith** and **Dumpster Diving.**

SERVE THE FAITH

When you **Serve the Faith,** you're acting in accordance with the tenets of your religion or spirituality. You may be performing religious services officially or unofficially as a priest, performing charitable work, ferreting out sin and heresy, or just trying to connect to something greater than yourself.

State your intention and roll:

On a **9 or less,** things go awry and your devotion is tested. Choose one of the following:

- You have a crisis of faith.
- You are branded as impious or sinful.
- You lose yourself in your fervor and do something you regret.

On a **10-19,** you are rewarded for your pious efforts with one of the following as **Reserves:**

- Alms or the donation of supplies.
- A relationship with a fellow devotee.
- The means with which to punish enemies of the faith.
- A divine revelation.

However, questions arise about the strength of your faith from others or from within. You must perform one of the following acts to prove your devotion before you can take this downtime action again:

- Convert or smite a nonbeliever.
- Put on a grand display of your fervor.
- Sacrifice something important to you.
- Undergo a spiritual journey.

On a **20+,** you are exalted for your zeal. You may choose one of the rewards from the **10-19** list as **Reserves** and your faith is unquestioned.

DUMPSTER DIVING

When you go **Dumpster Diving,** you delve into the depths of the Junk Heap on Beacon to try and scrounge up something useful. Most of the Heap is useless piles of broken native subalterns, satellites, and rubble from prefabricated housing. Worse still, there's plenty of competitors who have already nabbed the easy pickings. Some of the Heap might even be dangerous. However, a true scavenger never stops searching for glorious paydirt.

State what specific Reserves you're looking for and roll:

On a **9 or less,** you don't get any **Reserves** and you roll on the **Useless Junk** table.

On a **10-19,** you get different **Reserves** than what you were looking for and you roll on the **Semi-Useless Junk** table.

On a **20+,** you get the **Reserves** you were looking for and you roll on the **Useful Junk** table.

On repeated table roll results, the GM can opt to allow the PC to reroll, though rolls on the **Useful Junk** table must be rerolled on the **Semi-Useless Junk** table.

GM NOTE

While the **Serve the Faith** downtime action may be used in any campaign, **Dumpster Diving's** junk tables are specific to *Pass the Torch.* Do not allow the PCs to view the Junk tables, since they contain spoilers.

USELESS JUNK

ROLL 1D20

1	You find a bear trap when it snaps around your leg. The pilot (not the mech) is **Slowed** for the next mission unless they are treated with a **difficult check.**
2	You find an ominous, humming crystal. (The PC receives ~~Pandora's Mark~~ if they touch it.)
3	You are stricken with a nasty disease. The pilot's max **HP** is halved for the next mission unless they are cured with a **check.**
4	A gang of scavengers jump you and beat you up. The pilot starts the next mission with half **HP.**
5	You fall into something gross and pick up a dreadful smell that won't come out no matter how many times you change clothes or wash. For the next mission you have **+1 Difficulty** for social **checks** with people that can smell you.
6	You accidentally kick off a chemical fire that spreads across a large section of the Heap.
7	You find a large, strangely familiar fluid tank with an odd odor coming from it. The tank is heavily sealed, and the bindings take some time to undo. It takes you entirely too long to figure out that some colonist has dumped a full septic tank.
8	You pick up a smear of black sludge on your clothes. The stain won't come out.
9	You delve too greedily and too deep, almost taking a dip in the Alloy River when the pile starts to slide under you.
10	After long hours hauling junk out of the way, you manage to unearth a tank full of inky black liquid. You trip and fall into it and wind up elsewhere on the planet (GM's choice).
11	You find an ancient, faded bag of foul smelling candy. You can't tell if it's supposed to smell that way, or if it's just gone bad.
12	You find an incredible piece of unknown technology! Alas, as you're pulling it out, the pile shifts to bury it with a trash avalanche that nearly entombs you along with it.
13	You find a broken solar satellite and nearly blind yourself with the concentrated reflection of your flashlight.
14	You find a badly damaged native subaltern. It spends its time collecting, compacting, and sorting junk, and from its collection you can tell that it's been at it for a while.
15	You find a mech power cell! Unfortunately, it's drained and half rusted to dust.
16	A sound system pre-loaded with odd, abrasive music that vaguely sounds like lyricless heavy metal. (The system identifies the band as 'Titanspawn' in Idish.)
17	After long hours spent hauling away garbage, you unearth a metal box with a hinged lid. Sure that you've found treasure, you unlatch the lid and open it. Inside, you find only yourself, staring back at you from the mirror-like bottom of the empty box.
18	You find one kiloton of pink salt.
19	You find a seemingly bottomless pile of grease-stained, empty pizza boxes. (Idish writing on the boxes say, "Atlas Pizzeria: Supporting a world's worth of toppings!")
20	You got lucky! Roll on the **Semi-Useless Junk** table.

SEMI-USELESS JUNK

ROLL 1D20

1	You got unlucky! Roll on the **Useless Junk** table.
2	Someone takes a picture of you digging around in garbage and posts it on omninet social media. You become a short-lived viral meme.
3	At the bottom and center of a wide crater in the garbage you find an incredibly dense 3-meter-wide ball of smooth, dark material partially sunk into the trash beneath it. It seems to have its own light gravitational pull.
4	A crumpled white poster has Idish written on it in a childish scrawl. (It says “If the Titans find this, then you’re too late idiots!”)
5	You find something like a beard trimmer, but it seems poorly designed for cutting hair.
6	You find a large crate of delicious, assorted chocolates. The seal on the crate has prevented it from going bad.
7	You find a scruffy mutt wandering the Heap. It was probably left behind by another scavenger.
8	You find an enormous cylinder made of tungsten. Tracing the edges under the Heap, it seems to be kilometers long.
9	You find what appears to be an oddly made divan. It looks uncomfortable to sit in despite the cushions.
10	You meet a wizened old man living in a hut built into the Heap. He offers to share mead and freshly baked bread with you.
11	You find an old slab of rusty metal with the faded Union insignia of the SecComm era.
12	You find a big clump of fragrant black lichen that makes your stomach grumble. (It’s strangely nutritious and tasty when eaten, though cooking it doesn’t seem to do anything no matter how hot the stove.)
13	You find a working slate with multiple message logs written in Idish. (It’s a list of formal complaints about ‘Arges’ and how they’ve released enormous, dangerous animals into Pan, Boreas, the Dexamen sea, along the Phlegethon, and other places. Allows PCs to learn Level 1 Idish.)
14	You find a cask of shimmering liquor unlike any you’ve ever tasted.
15	You find a black-scaled lizard hatchling the size of a cat with a molten hot mouth.
16	You find a mysterious puzzle cube. (Upon solving it with a **heroic check,** the cube opens. A note in Idish inside says, “Well done! But can you find and solve my next puzzle and earn the treasure?” Coordinates lead to a section of the Crumple Zone, the puzzle lost during the ~~Pandemonium~~.)
17	You find a perfectly cut gem the size of a grapefruit sitting atop a pile of metal dust. (The dust is inactive Argent Plague nanites, though that’s not obvious unless they’re studied with special equipment.)
18	You find a fractured but still barely functional slate. All you can pull from it appears to be a child’s school project on translating the SecComm language to Idish. (Allows PCs to learn Level 2 Idish.)
19	You find a strange, damaged native subaltern that speaks. (~~Feltz~~ is bored and will chat with the PC without being very helpful.)
20	You got lucky! Roll on the **Useful Junk** table.

USEFUL JUNK

ROLL 1D20

1	You find the **Gravity Generator** which can be used as **Reserves.**
2	You find a batch of specially prepared locus, a species of psychedelic fungus, that broadens your horizons when consumed. ~~When you take the **Get Focused** downtime action with an experienced guide to gain the **'Attune to Witness'** trigger or to improve it, you can increase the trigger by an additional **+2** (to a maximum of **+6**).~~
3	You find a caged singularity which can be used as **Reserves.** It grants you the one-time ability to use the Apollo frame's **Black Mass Core System** without spending your **CP.**
4	You find a piece of equipment of your choice from the Mech Equipment and Gear table (***Lancer Core Rulebook*** pg 51) that can be used as **Reserves.**
5	You find a working slate with a large language database translating SecComm era words to Idish. (Allows PCs to learn up to Level 3 Idish.)
6	You find some sort of identification token. (Idaean ID badge, ~~can be used to register a building, and will delay Hivewatch mech forces from attacking humans for a short period while they check the registration, though it has no special permissions.)~~

LICENSING

The PCs will have to undergo numerous sessions of licensing over the campaign, which stretches from LL0 to LL12. Once they've reached Beacon, official and unofficial channels for licensing are available. The official licensing channel for most of the major manufacturers (IPS-N, HA, and SSC) is in Fengdu, where each manufacturer hosts training and licensing facilities and programs.

IPS-N licenses often involve field excursions and logistics exercises in various, far-flung corners of Beacon. HA licenses are typically courses in advanced technology, field tactics, and live fire exercises. SSC licenses involve simulation training, personal coaching, and genetic/cybernetic treatments.

Horus licenses must be acquired in a more esoteric and roundabout way. This typically involves deep dives into the dark crevasses of the omninet for obscure licensing methods.

Use the **Licensing by Manufacturer** table for a series of prompts to assist the GM in flavoring the licensing process during downtime, along with the various **Sights** tables from regions and settlements across Beacon. You can have them roll **checks** to see how they perform under their training programs, though they will receive the License Level regardless.

It's recommended to have PCs experience the events together if they are licensing with the same manufacturer. It's also highly recommended to have Darryl Wahzbeck (IPS-N), Bruce Dawson (HA), and Naomi Grenyr (SSC) be recurring figures for their respective licensing processes, and have them be the source introducing license-based NHPs to the PCs.

UNOFFICIAL LICENSING

The PCs may lose their ability to acquire licenses through official channels from one or more manufacturers for many reasons, including the following:

- Fengdu didn't survive the siege in **Mission: Ghost Town.**
- The PCs made enemies of a manufacturer or the entire HIC.
- The PCs refuse to participate in capitalism.

In this case, there are alternative routes to licensing. Hunting down an alternative provider may require one or more downtime actions. The following are some examples:

- The PCs can acquire licenses via correspondence courses purchased by the Annorum or Union.
- Black market sales of licenses are common, with the licenses stripped from deceased pilots.
- HORUS may be happy to undercut and screw over its competitors. Even if the PCs make enemies of one HORUS cell, that just makes them friends with another.
- The Farseers are attempting to undercut the HIC by developing their own off-brand models of familiar chassis.

At the GM's discretion, and if the players deserve it, the PCs may hear a rumor of a black market trader who sells off-brand licenses at extremely reasonable prices. The only problem is that they're unstable and unhinged. Most importantly, the trader has the worst, most ridiculous accent the GM can conjure.

LICENSING BY MANUFACTURER

ROLL 1D6

	IPS-N	HA	HORUS	SSC
1-2	A game of zero-G racing shows how fast the trainee can navigate the cramped loading bay of an orbiting freighter with heavy cargo.	Coursework consists of highly technical lessons on machining and metallurgy. The final test has you separating mixed metals from the Alloy River into usable feedstock.	After signing up for numerous self-help tutorials and newsletters, your omnibox is deluged with spam. Somewhere in the aggregated metadata of these emails is your licensing information.	The first strike a warrior makes is their first impression. Style separates the true pilot from the pretenders. Cue clothes shopping and makeover montage.
3-4	This training course involves navigating the forested hills around Fengdu. While traveling, the PC suddenly feels eyes on them. The native subaltern freezes in place as soon as they are looked at.	The PCH is hosting an improvised mech arena battle in the Junk Yard. Contestants are given a time limit to scavenge parts and build a battle mech before using it to defeat the other contestants. HA sends the PC over with instructions to win.	Buying a series of useless nutritional supplements, the PC receives a complementary box of cereal. Inside is a shitty plastic decoder which decrypts the locked parts of your license.	A sales person attempts to upsell the PC a series of cybernetic enhancements to get an advantage over the competition. These include optical tactics overlays, fiber-enhanced reflexes, and a digitized frontal lobe.
5-6	The PC is tasked to use spare parts and scrap metal to invent a container that will be accelerated out of a railgun at high speeds from the ground to orbit, where it will be caught in a freight net. A dozen eggs must survive the journey without breaking.	The PC's class is brought on a boat ride on the Dexamen Sea. The class's goal is to construct a large metal ball with a hollow core and see how deep it can be lowered before water pressure crushes it. Something massive steals a ball and ends class early.	The PC must watch a boxset of the banned docu-drama, DHIYED and Me: Teacher, Monster, Friend. It's classified as a cognitohazard, but the credits of each episode contain part of your license.	War is an artform. The PC is given the task of creating a beautiful work of art, such as a painting, a sculpture, a poem, a form of dance, or something even more esoteric. The result must be an expression of a feeling or passion.

SECTION 1

SETTING

HUMAN TIMELINE

The *Pass the Torch* campaign starts in the year 6134u. This timeline follows after the timeline from the *Lancer Core Rulebook.* The calendar system is the Union Era, abbreviated to 'u'.

- **5042u:** The Argent Plague is first discovered in the Cradle system, the home of Union.
- **5047u:** Cradle, once known as Earth, is utterly devoured by the Plague, followed by the rest of the planets in the Solar System. The Plague is carried on ships fleeing across the Milky Way.
- **5050-5172u:** Named the Vanishing Era, this is a dark period in history. Despite quarantine measures, the Plague begins appearing in star systems across the galaxy. It ravages planets, space stations, and habitats alike. Methods of fighting the Plague are limited to technologically inferior nanoswarms, barrier systems, and projected high energy fields. It's unknown how many billions of people die in this era.
- **5172u:** Dr. Sarah Lumen leads a team of scientists to discover dusklight and its ability to fight the Argent Plague. Volunteer forces begin the Luminous Crusade; they bring dusklight and order to every corner of a decaying galaxy and curb the spread of the Plague. The newly revealed Voladores technology for blinkjumping enables this swift delivery, though at great cost of life.
- **5188u:** After questioning the efficacy and motives of Union's actions, Dr. Lumen dies in a botched assassination that goes public. The subsequent outrage spurs rebellion and civil war throughout Union space. The death of a martyr sparks the formation of a new religion. The most pious and vengeful, including Pendragon, the NHP assistant of Dr. Lumen, call for the Second Luminous Crusade.
- **5188-5262u:** Already weakened by the Argent Plague which had ravaged the Core worlds, the loyalist remnants of Union fight a losing battle against revolutionary forces. Union's vast scope means that its civil war has to be waged across bloody decades.

  The finishing blow arrives when Lumenite Crusaders and Union revolutionists deliver a devastating kinetic bombardment from orbit against the loyalists' new capital on the planet Rodero, pushing the planet into an ice age. The shattered remnants of the loyalists formally vote to dissolve, ending the ThirdComm Period and marking the beginning of FourthComm.
- **5215-5277u:** During the struggle, old 'allies' seize opportunities in the growing power vacuum. The Karrakin Trade Baronies consolidate their power. Prime Baron Empyrea leads the effort to aid devastated Metropolitan and Diasporan worlds who feel abandoned by Union in their time of need.
- **5277u:** The people of the Concern herald Prime Baron Empyrea, an outspoken and devout Lumenite, as an element of the divine and the rightful leader in Union's place. She is crowned Anno, and the Annorum Empyrea is founded.
- **5309u:** Scientists discover that many stars are beginning to dim and lose mass. The cause is the Argent Plague, which is somehow able to survive on the stars' surface. Dusklight is found to be unable to protect the stars, the powerful light waves from direct sunlight altering and negating it.
- **5477u+:** War breaks out between the Annorum and Union. It occurs in irregular skirmishes, usually over claims to territorial space and planetary resources. The slow-burning war over control of vast swathes of the civilized galaxy continues to this day with occasional devastating flare ups.
- **6003u:** A station on the outermost edge of civilized Union space records an anomaly: a source of light emerging in a vast, empty gulf between star systems. The apparent and seemingly impossible birth of a star baffles scientists. In a galaxy where the lights of stars fade, slowly devoured by the Plague, the mysterious shining beacon in the dark only grows brighter. Union sends an expedition to explore it via blinkjumps.
- **6026u:** Those that survive the journey report a vast planet with abundant resources. It's suitable for life, with its own bizarre ecosystem. Most importantly, the planet is untouched by the Argent Plague. The remaining expedition members on Beacon go silent after their report never to be heard from again.

  The Annorum and Union broker a deal with the neutral custodians of the blink gates, the Farseers, to send an expedition to establish a major blink gate near the rogue planet. The two parties settle on naming the planet Beacon.
- **6134u:** The current year. Construction of the far flung blink gate nears completion. Forces, factions, and desperate families across the galaxy are making plans for Beacon.

TERMS & TECHNOLOGIES

The following terms and concepts are present throughout the campaign. For some items, specific aspects are classified by powerful organizations, while other facets are closely kept secrets.

Information is divided into public, private, and secret knowledge. Public knowledge is included in the **Player's Guide.**

ARGENT PLAGUE (PROMETHEUS FLAME)

PUBLIC

The Argent Plague is an advanced nanite blackwash capable of self-reproduction and destroying matter. Its existence is a threat to humanity. The only effective weapon against it is dusklight, which forces the swarm to destroy itself. Before dusklight, humanity fought it with technologically inferior nanoswarms, barrier systems, and projected high energy fields to limited effect. Its origin is a mystery, though there is speculation it was a Union or corporate weapons project that escaped from containment.

In low or zero-g, the Plague appears to be a silver cloud of shimmering dust. When many nanites gather together in a swarm, or when it's subjected to gravity, it appears semi-liquid. It spreads by forming nanite chains and kinetically 'lashing the whip' to launch itself in every direction at high speeds. This appears as swirling, massed threads that billow like flame extending from a central liquid mass, or in longer ropes and twisting 'silver rivers' if enough nanites gather. If a viewer can see it with the naked eye, then they are likely already coated with a faint dusting of nanites.

In gravitational fields, the Plague's nanite chain-whip method helps it spread across surfaces. In space, a swarm is capable of detecting nearby sources of gravity (i.e. matter) and launching nanites toward it. A launched nanite can travel for decades or centuries until it hits an object. Once a nanite encounters matter, it sticks it to itself and activates paracausal technology to make it vanish into the blink.

Each Plague nanite is roughly 750 nanometers across. It naturally consumes metal faster than other substances, since it can use a portion of most metals to replicate itself, building additional nanites rather than sending it all into the blink. It is even capable of surviving, though not replicating, on the surface of stars, where it continues its relentless consumption. It is estimated that the Plague has already erased up to 20% of the stellar mass of some stars, depending on the level of infection.

PRIVATE

The following is known only by high-ranked officials and scientists of Union, the Annorum, the HIC, along with a few other influential individuals, though many have suspicions.

The matter made to vanish by the Plague is unlikely to be completely destroyed or lost. Instead, it is being transported elsewhere with blink technology.

Attempts to crack open a nanite led to its instant destruction, resulting in more matter than the nanite could possibly contain. Scientists believe it is using unknown technology that increases the spatial storage capacity of each nanite, rendering them larger on the inside. This extraspatial boundary is likely what allows it to survive the heat of stars without melting.

It is known to have some connection to Witness, the empathic link shared by Egregorians. It's theorized that Witness is used as a means to control the swarm via instructions, though the Plague has never been seen altering its basic behavior. When in proximity to a Plague swarm, those attuned to Witness can see flashes of memories, like echoes, of those devoured by the swarm.

Witness is not strictly limited to Egregorians, since humans can engage with it as well. Its existence has been acknowledged since Hercynia joined with human civilization and the Egregorians became widely known. Thus, the powers that be do not suspect Egregorians for creating the Argent Plague, especially since Hercynia was one of many planets destroyed by it.

SECRET

REDACTED

BLINKJUMPING

PUBLIC

A highly dangerous method of repeatedly using blinkspace teleportation technology to carve a connection between vast distances without blink gates. With this tech, travelers can leap several light-years in an instant. By chaining blinkjumps together, it's even possible to reach untouched stars across the galaxy.

However, each blinkjump carries a small chance of the ship being lost in blinkspace. As such, long journeys tend to be made with numerous ships, of which only a fraction will arrive at the destination.

This technology was originally a secret of the Voladores, but they revealed it when the galaxy needed to rapidly spread the means to produce dusklight to the far corners of civilization. Cargo ships full of blinkdust were delivered by Crusaders via blinkjump, ultimately saving countless lives, though many of the Crusaders were lost to the blink along the way.

On many capital and large subline ships, blinkjumping has replaced the nearlight bolt as an emergency escape method. Still, a sudden and uncalculated blinkjump can just as easily teleport a ship into an asteroid as it can to safety, and even calculated blinkjumps are never 100% accurate or safe.

SECRET
REDACTED

DUSKLIGHT

PUBLIC
Dusklight is the only effective weapon against the Argent Plague. This invention of Dr. Sarah Lumen has shielded the civilized galaxy from outright consumption.

Today, dusklight generators are present on every starship, space station, and in every major planet-bound facility. Automated sensors pick up Plague nanite activity and activate the dusklight, dispersing it instantly. When it shines on Plague nanites, they shimmer into black void, then vanish. For other areas, mobile generators that produce large fields of dusklight are transported via ship or vehicle to cleanse any trace of Plague.

Like some other forms of blinklight, dusklight shines through physical objects, though it is not without limitations. It cannot shine through living, biological material. Because of this, it is difficult to completely eliminate the Plague in any area with life. A single nanite can survive inside the cells of an organism, even a single-celled bacterium. It will eventually devour it and construct more nanites to rebuild a swarm.

Dusklight is warm yellow and orange, and was named for its similarity to the last rays of light from a setting sun. Shadows cast by people within the light stretch far longer than they should. Dusklight also sometimes casts strange, misshapen shadows where there is nothing visible to block the light. Some people find it soothing, while others find it unsettling. Dusklight is typically deactivated when not in use since it washes out and mutes other colors, though Lumenite temples and churches keep dusklight lamps and LEDs shining at all hours.

The exact frequency and wavelength of the light is important, since anything else fails to disperse the Plague. The light is produced when it shines through glass or clear plastic laminated with a thin layer of blinkdust, an anomalous residue that collects on ships traveling through blinkspace.

Dusklight has a limited radius based on the strength of its light source, and it takes many generators to protect wide areas. Planet-sized dusklight generators do not exist, so many planets have patrolling ships that scan for Plague activity. With the generators they carry, they scour it from the surface, or from rare underground pockets.

SECRET
REDACTED

NANOVACCINE

PUBLIC
A form of greywash nanite designed to live in the bloodstream. Using tiny dusklight LEDs, they hunt down and disperse Argent Plague nanites that attach themselves to their host. They also fight with other non-Plague nanites as a form of immune system.
This greywash is long-lasting, but it cannot replicate itself, so it needs occasional booster shots. While powerful, the nanovaccine can be overwhelmed by a flood of Plague nanites.

The early versions of the vaccine did not use dusklight at all, instead relying on near-toxic levels of nanites to overwhelm and destroy the Plague before it multiplied in the body. Some people are unable to take the nanovaccine due to medical reasons, and are thus especially vulnerable to the Plague. These poor souls have deadly allergic reactions to any nanites, and must live hermetically sealed, since even a single Plague nanite can spell eventual death as it replicates inside their bodies.

NULLIGHT

PUBLIC
A form of blinklight similar to dusklight but of a different frequency. Where it shines, dusklight has no effect; many forms of blinklight are nullified in its presence. Thus, nullight is considered sacrilegious by most practicing Lumenites, and illegal across almost all of human civilization. This hasn't stopped its use by terrorists, religious extremists, mercenaries, and unacknowledged military special operations units who weaponize the Plague.

Nullight penetrates physical, nonbiological objects like dusklight, but it's invisible to the human eye; it can best be detected by the way it extinguishes dusklight. Since nullight cannot penetrate biological entities, it doesn't interfere with internal nanovaccines fighting the Plague.

LUMENISM

As of the current date, the most prolific religion in the galaxy is Lumenism. Its central figure is the deceased scientist, Dr. Sarah Lumen, who invented dusklight in humanity's darkest hour.

BIRTH OF DUSKLIGHT

During the Vanishing Era, worlds were torn apart by the Argent Plague. Scientists led by Sarah developed a form of blinkspace-aspected light (or blinklight) which triggered the nanite swarm to consume itself and vanish. At last, a weapon to hold back an unstoppable foe.

Then began the Luminous Crusade to bring dusklight to every corner of Union space and beyond. The formula for its creation was delivered across the galaxy nearly instantaneously via the omninet, though the blinkdust required for its production was rarely on hand for worlds far from blink gates.

Armed with Volador blinkjump technology, volunteer forces formed up in relief militia corps to journey to every surviving world and deliver salvation to beleaguered locals. The Crusaders battled on every front to preserve diminishing space-borne matter, and local Union and Diasporan forces were either forced to assist their efforts or shunted out of relevance.

THE LIFE AND DEATH OF LUMEN

As a result of saving countless worlds, Sarah Lumen was catapulted into instant stardom. The somewhat bookish, shy woman was suddenly thrown into the spotlight, a galaxy's worth of adoring devotees hanging on her every word. Adjusting to her situation as best she could, she used her platform to advocate for humanity's greatest virtues: unity between diverse peoples, helping those in need, and the pursuit of scientific truth.

Alas, in one fateful interview broadcast in real time across the omninet, Dr. Sarah Lumen was asked the question: *'What do you think of Union?'*

> **Dr. Sarah Lumen:** *"I think that Union is largely a force for good. Ensuring all are provided for is a grand cause… but it's not perfect. Where was Union when the Argent Plague gutted the outer rings? Diverting Crusaders and shipments of dusklight toward the inner rings, the core of Union space, all because some bureaucrats wanted to protect themselves above others. How can Union uphold its Utopian Pillars if it's unwilling to purge its bad elements?"*

This remark was captured and broadcasted as a revelation to recovering civilizations, who were only too eager to find somewhere to place the blame. The storm of criticism and economic warfare that followed battered the still floundering Union, despite Sarah's attempts to walk back her statements. Some extremists took drastic measures into their hands, and terrorist attacks in Union space grew rampant.

Then tragedy struck. Dr. Sarah Lumen was killed in a botched assassination ordered by a desperate Union CentComm representative of the Interstellar coalition. The operation, which was supposed to have looked like an accident, went sideways when a devotee amongst the assassins' ranks defected at the last moment to warn Lumen of the plan. The assassination instead became a messy, public affair that was captured and broadcasted across the galaxy.

Despite the kill order being a unilateral action without consensus by Union, Dr. Lumen was immediately heralded as a martyr. Her death sparked both a revolution and a holy war, the Second Luminous Crusade, that fractured the Union.

AFTER LUMEN

In the centuries since her death, Lumenism has formed around the worship of Dr. Sarah Lumen and her ideologies. Historians and theologians analyzed every aspect of the numerous records of her life and death. This ranged from her baby pictures posted to social media by her parents to catalogues of details from after the date of her martyrdom.

The dusklight research team, as well as the heroes of the First and Second Crusades, were raised to sainthood. Pendragon, the research NHP that worked on the project, acts as Dr. Lumen's still living herald. He has come into and out of the spotlight many times across the centuries.

Modern Lumenites are divided, with individual refractions (i.e. branches) of their faith holding differing fundamental truths inherent to their beliefs. The primary fault lines are:

- Dr. Lumen's existence as a human vs. a divine being.
- Belief in a centralized leadership vs. decentralization as a principle.
- The nature and measure of sin, and how the faithful should 'purge bad elements' from their midst.
- The pursuit of truth, and whether it should be done at any cost.
- The existence of an afterlife and the nature of the ultimate end state of the universe.

Naturally, extremist factions have risen and fallen in the intervening time. As of the current year, the most prominent refraction of Lumenism is the militant Church of the Flickering Flame.

LUMENISM TOUCHSTONES

While individual Lumenites and their refractions vary widely, these are some typical religious touchstones:

- Followers have a small dusklight LED somewhere on their body, such as on a cord around their neck or wrist. It visibly shines through clothing
- Places of worship, such as churches, tend to hold mass and services shrouded only in dusklight. The same is typically true for personal prayer.
- Terms of light and illumination are generally seen positively. I.e. "Walk the illuminated path", "She's a bright young child", "He's gone, joined with Lumen in her radiance".
- Terms of darkness are generally seen negatively. I.e. "That fool is more than a little dim", "She's wandering in shadow", "Damned to darkness".

FACTIONS & CHARACTERS

Beacon is a pie that everyone wants their finger in. No matter how big the pie, someone is always going to want a bigger share.

These are the major and minor factions present throughout the campaign, along with the important characters from each faction. Public knowledge of each faction is listed in the **Player's Guide,** while other elements are kept secret.

Each faction also has a section that describes their military forces and their relative strength against the other forces on Beacon. Although the largest powers on Beacon (Union, the Annorum, and the HIC) could hypothetically mobilize tens of thousands of capital and subline ships, an agreement has been made prior to the opening of Beacon's blink gate. To bring such staggering forces into close proximity would result in an immediate war that would likely spell the destruction of Beacon and its blink gate.

Instead, naval forces are limited by treatise to a singular Fleet from Union and an Armada from the Annorum, along with the HICs' own smaller security forces.

Some characters have their combat capabilities listed, including what mech they would pilot into combat. If a character's combat capabilities are not listed, they are a **T1 Human.**

This section is for recurring characters. Characters that appear only in a single mission will instead be described at the start of that mission's section.

ANNORUM EMPYREA

An established major power prior to Union's rise, the Karrakin Trade Baronies can trace their origin to the days before the Fall of Old Earth. They weathered the rise and fall of both SecComm and ThirdComm. While they suffered from the Plague during the Vanishing Era, the Baronic Concern still fared far better than other Core worlds.

With the invention of dusklight and Union's civil war, they were perfectly positioned to establish control over vast swathes of previously Union space, folding them into the Baronic Concern. Thus, in the eyes of many, the Baronies became the de facto replacement for Union after it delivered aid, established order, and brokered ceasefires across the smoldering, plagued fragments of humanity.

Then Prime Baron Empyrea amassed power and flexed the autocratic authority granted to her during the state of emergency triggered by the Plague. She claimed the title of Anno on the Annorum Throne and founded her dynasty. There followed a period of violent quelling of dissent amongst the noble houses, some of whom disputed her ascension. The leaders of each major house were allowed to retain their title and seat on the Baronic Council, but the Council itself was relegated to an administrative and advisory role.

Empyrea became her family name passed on through her lineage to those who would succeed her. She had the blessing of the growing devout Lumenite factions, who saw her as an element of the divine itself. It is tradition for her descendants to ostensibly be Lumenites of one or another refraction, though not all have been so pious.

Recent Annos and their families have typically chosen non-denominational Lumenite faiths and distanced themselves from the major refractions to reduce their influence. Some have even rekindled traditions and belief in the Passions, which fell out of favor amongst the nobility with the rise of Lumenism. Many of the ignoble still hold to the old ways and practices, searching for meaning in omens and bonds.
Since the first inauguration, the Annorum Empyrea has seen many Annos. They varied in temperament, acting in turn as power-hungry dictators, as peaceful diplomats, and sometimes even as spiritual leaders in times of crisis. The previous Anno, Yandell, was a cruel dictator that held the Annorum in her iron grip.

The current Anno is Cyrus Empyrea, who grieves the recent loss of his Royal Consort, slain by assassins. The Ungratefuls, a rebellious force of insurgents, have claimed responsibility for the attack, and Anno Cyrus has responded with a furious wave of crackdowns and martial law imposed across the Concern.

Marshal Samuel Ludov has been sent to lead the Annorum Armada on Beacon. Anno Cyrus has also sent his disgraced son, Prince Altair, to represent the royal family's interests.

When the Annorum arrives on Beacon, it will claim **Bouquet** as its headquarters.

HOUSE OF THORNS

A secret society amongst the upper crust of the Annorum who conspire to kill or puppet the Anno and his heirs. They intend to return the Annorum to a baronic form of government, as it was when it was known as the Karrakin Trade Baronies, minus the Prime Baron. Of course, the leading members of the Thorns would be put in place on the Baronic Council and rule over the Baronies once freed from the tyrannical grip of the Anno.

The Thorns are willing to do much to achieve this goal. They have already assassinated Megahna Empyrea, the Royal Consort, and made false claims on behalf of the rebellious ignoble movement, the Ungratefuls. Throughout the events of the campaign, they will attempt to assassinate Altair, kidnap Soleni, and use the Artemis weapons platform to destroy Throne Karrakis, killing the Anno and his remaining heirs other than those on Beacon.

Their ultimate objective is to secretly clone Soleni and replicate her subjectivity with a few select alterations, then dispose of the original. With all other heirs deceased, the cloned version of Soleni would take the throne. Her reprogramming would push her to abdicate her seat and step down, ending the Annorum Empyrea and achieving the Thorns' goal of a second Dynasticlade. The first occurred nearly four thousand years ago, when Anno Tyrannus voluntarily abdicated the throne, making way for the eventual formation of the Karrakin Trade Baronies.

If Soleni's nature as a clone were ever discovered, she would be deemed by Annorate law to be unable to hold the throne. Without any other clear heir, the House of Thorns may still be able to navigate the return of the baronic system, but only after years of infighting. The Thorns consider this a fallback plan.

Marshal Samuel Ludov and Lady Galea Vebelle are trusted members of the House of Thorns on Beacon who will enact these schemes. The Thorns' largest and most critical military force on Beacon is the Crimson Roses, a house company. These elite kavalieres and kuirassers are trusted with basic knowledge regarding the Thorns' goals and are sworn to secrecy. The Roses are led by Galea.

MILITARY STRENGTH

The Annorate Unified Command (AUC) has sent Armada 9 Khayradin, a multi-house coalition to Beacon. This Armada consists of naval groups, each of which includes 3 to 5 capital-class ships, and varying numbers of escort subline ships. The capital-class battlecruisers, rasées, and carriers each have a Captain who takes orders from the naval group's Commodore aboard their designated flagship. The armada as a whole is governed by Marshal Ludov who sits on the battlecruiser flagship, the *AENS Snapdragon* from the House of Stone's largest naval group.

Among coalition armadas with forces from multiple houses, if the Marshal is unable to give orders or dead, the chain of command passes down first to Prince Altair. If necessary, command goes down the chain to the senior Commodore of the house who contributed the second most forces (as rated when the Armada was formed), then down to the third, and so on. The order of contribution is as follows: the Houses of Stone, Glass, Promise, Sand, Remembrance, and Smoke, along with numerous minor houses and reserves sent by the Anno.

In addition to warships, each house has sent house companies of ignoble soldiers, noble officers, and support noncombatants. The soldiers are typically disciplined and work well within their own house, though political friction can occur when mixing together disparate forces. Each house company's ground force has soldiers organized into corps under Knights, who are themselves placed in regiments under Knight-Commanders. Mechanized forces are their own units under Knight-Commanders, typically consisting entirely of kuirassers, a kavaliere leading kuirassers, or an elite team of kavalieres. Each ship's ground forces report to their respective Captain.

The Annorum's forces on Beacon have a significant qualitative advantage compared to Union in both capital ship strength and infantry forces. The ignoble's rank discipline is superior to Union's relatively lax marines. However, the Annorum has major flaws. The noble officers are of uneven quality, with many having gained their position through pure nepotism. Union's Admiral Torus is the superior strategist compared to either the overly cautious Commander Ludov or the bold Prince Altair. Political tension between major and minor houses also creates delays and incidents that can hamper their fighting capabilities.

Annorate soldiers sometimes refer to Union marines derogatively as 'Onions'.

ALTAIR EMPYREA HE/HIM

3RD PRINCE OF THE ANNORUM EMPYREA

Charismatic, down to earth, haunted

"The other party was a snooze, more like a wine and cheese tasting, so I thought I'd crash yours instead. The name's Altair. You can forget the titles for tonight. Just deal me in. My money spends as good as anyone's, but only if you can win it off me."

Priorities:

- Protect his family; he cannot bear to lose any more.
- Make his father proud of him.
- Challenge himself through battle and exploration.

Third in line for the throne of the Anno, Altair has been prepared from birth for the possibility of his ascension to the throne. As is tradition, the third child of the Anno shall be given to war. Their lot is to lead forces against the Annorum's enemies, or to avenge the first two children should they fall in battle or to treachery. Thus, Altair was trained and blooded as a kuirasser, then a kavaliere, fighting on the front lines of skirmishes against Union since he was old enough to pilot a mech. He became comfortable with it, and any streak of noble privilege in his demeanor was cleansed in a baptism of enemy fire and mud. The soldiers he fought beside grew to respect him.

Tragedy struck on the day Altair and his mother, the Royal Consort Megahna, were attacked during a formal inspection of battlements on San Simeon, and Megahna was fatally wounded. Altair stayed by Megahna's side as she passed in the aftermath, and the assassins escaped capture. Aggrieved by the loss of his wife and the failure of his son to protect or avenge her, Anno Cyrus cursed the silent Altair in a tirade in open court. Cyrus sent his disgraced son to the frontier of Beacon, out of his sight and mind.

Altair was placed under Marshal Samuel Ludov with no position of command over any forces besides his own retinue of protective Vigilants. He only hopes he can redeem himself in the eyes of his father and the Annorum, and he's willing to take any risk to do it.

COMBAT CAPABILITIES

Altair is a **T3 Human** who is a **Veteran** with a **Melee Weapon.** When piloting, his mech's stats are as follows:

'Mantle' - T3 Elite Commander Sentinel (Commander: Press On!; **Sentinel:** Bodyguard, Rapid Response, Wrath-Lock)

SOLENI EMPYREA SHE/HER

5TH PRINCESS OF THE ANNORUM EMPYREA

Rebellious, naive, compassionate

"In my studies last night I learned that ripe bananas glow blue under UV light because of how the chlorophyll breaks down. Super useless factoid. Meanwhile, my brothers and my sisters got all the fun subjects. War, money, command. Well, except for Reese. He can keep his Lumen."

Priorities:

- See new and exciting places and things.
- Make Altair smile.
- Avoid Nora's disciplinary measures.

Youngest amongst her siblings and fifth in line for the throne of the Anno, though Soleni doesn't want to rule. At 13 years old, she has her own goals, and seldom do they mesh with what her father and her recently deceased mother wanted for her.

As is tradition, the fifth child of the Anno shall be schooled in technology and broadly in the sciences in order to advise their older brothers and sisters, who are more likely to sit the throne. While Soleni has a natural aptitude for the subject, the extremely dry topics and endless hours of study have instilled in her a rebellious desire to explore the galaxy firsthand, instead of through lessons.

When her mother died, Soleni's heart broke. Then it broke twice over when she witnessed her father verbally abusing her brother, Altair, before sending him to Beacon. Soleni resolved that she wouldn't let Altair suffer alone, and so planned to run away and join him. When her Vigilant, Nora, caught her in the act, she got swept along for the journey.

The PCs may end up assisting in the plan if they participate in the Prologue **Mission: Cloak and Dagger.**

NORA STONEGATE SHE/HER

VIGILANT OF PRINCESS SOLENI

Dedicated, strict, sympathetic

"Princess, even if you never become Anno, you will still serve the Annorum as best you can. Your duty means your life may not be as exciting as you hoped, and my duty is to make sure it stays that way. Stop scowling."

Priorities:

- See that no harm comes to Soleni.
- Ensure that Soleni grows into a fine leader.
- Those who killed the Consort must pay.

Nora was orphaned at a young age on the planet Stonegate when it became contested territory in the war with Union. She was forced to fight to survive. When the battle ended, the refugees and orphans were given shelter or relocated. Nora was evaluated and offered a chance to undergo a grueling training program to join the Vigilants, the guardians trusted with the security and protection of the Anno and their royal family. With nothing else to her name, she accepted.

As an Apprentice Vigilant, Nora was there when the Royal Consort was assassinated. While the other Vigilants pursued the assassins, she was tasked with staying behind to guard the crying Prince and the dying Megahna. All four Vigilants died in their pursuit.

Afterward, Nora was raised to full Vigilant status and assigned to the rebellious Soleni. In an unenviable position, Nora was forced into the role of taskmaster to ensure the princess took her lessons seriously. When she discovered Soleni's plan to run away to Beacon, Nora was at first appalled. Then she reconsidered. Deciding that Soleni might be safer away from the Concern, Nora played along with the runaway scheme.

COMBAT CAPABILITIES

Nora is a **T3 Human** who is both a **Veteran** and **Armored** with a **Ranged Weapon.** She does not typically pilot a mech.

GALEA VEBELLE SHE/HER

THE IRON ROSE OF THE HOUSE OF GLASS

Ex-pankrati, bloodthirsty, ambitious

"I'm embarrassed at how many years it took me to recognize the cowardice of the much-vaunted pankrati. So bold are these warriors while they shelter amongst the endless rules of the arena, but give them a taste of their own blood and they fold like paper cranes."

Priorities:

- Fight against skillful opponents.
- Attain fame or infamy; it doesn't matter which.
- The end of Empyrea rule (a distant third priority).

The scion of the illustrious House of Glass was born with every advantage. So much so that life became dull for young Galea. The only joy she found was in the thrill of the Pankration Mekani, watching pankrati battle in gladiatorial bouts before shouting crowds. She took up the sport herself, swiftly gaining notoriety for her talent and her ferocious, flashy fighting style, earning the title 'Iron Rose'. There were several incidents during matches that resulted in her opponents' maiming or death outside of blood-bouts, leading to fewer challengers. Bored once more, Galea retired from the arena.

Instead, she threw herself into battle against Union, earning a reputation as a legendary but bloodthirsty kavaliere. When even this was not enough, she agreed to a furtive invitation to a secret organization known as the House of Thorns. Sent as part of a team of assassins, she personally killed the Royal Consort, Megahna. While Galea cares little for the politics of the Annorum or the potential barony, she wouldn't mind a chair at the Baronic Council. More importantly, she wants to find a real challenge in battle, but despairs of finding anyone worthy.

Galea leads the Crimson Roses, a house company that owes fealty to the House of Glass. In truth, the Roses are a military force loyal to the House of Thorns, privy to the group's goals and sworn to secrecy.

COMBAT CAPABILITIES

Galea is a **T3 Human** who is both a **Veteran** and has **15 Evasion.** She has a **Melee Weapon.** When piloting, her mech's stats are as follows:

'Black Bacarra' - T3 Ultra Duelist (**Ultra:** Short-Cycle Lance, Supreme Melee, Volley Module; **Duelist:** Boast, Crossfire Pistol, Crowd-Surf, Face Me!)

SAMUEL LUDOV HE/HIM

MARSHAL OF THE ANNORUM ARMADA

Resolute, regretful, meticulous

"History is littered with the monsters who are reviled for making hard choices. If my fate is to join them, then that's the price I will pay. I only hope that my hard choices are also the right choices."

Priorities:

- The end of Empyrea rule.
- The subjugation of Union.
- To pay for his crimes once his dark work is done.

Over a century and a half in age, Samuel Ludov is an experienced and steady commander, having conducted numerous campaigns against Union and other forces. As a prominent noble in the House of Order, which sits closely aligned with the Annorate throne, Samuel makes an obvious choice to lead the expedition to Beacon. However, Samuel is also embroiled in a conspiracy with the House of Thorns. He is entrusted by the Thorns with achieving their ambitious goals on Beacon.

As a young man, Samuel's closest friend and secret love was Pavel Durront. House Durront was a minor house of trade whose patriarch was caught making illegal business deals with Union. Anno Yandell, the Anno before Cyrus, made an example of House Durront and had every man, woman, and child executed for treason, including Pavel. Seeing this and other atrocities as the act of a tyrant, Samuel came to the conclusion that no single person could be trusted with the fate of a galaxy-spanning realm. While there have been good Annos, there are enough tyrants in history to make it clear to Samuel: power on this scale cannot be trusted to succession alone.

Though he personally likes Altair and Soleni, that will not stop him from doing what he must. Even if it means the deaths of billions, and his own damnation.

EMPYREA FAMILY

Cyrus Empyrea (he/him): Anno Empyrea XXIII, the 23rd in line after Empyrea I. He rules with a heavy hand, especially since his partner, Megahna, was assassinated. He sent the disgraced Prince Altair to the frontier world of Beacon after Altair's failure to protect or avenge Megahna.

Megahna Empyrea (she/her): The deceased Royal Consort, Cyrus's partner, and mother of five, including Altair and Soleni. Beloved by both her family and the Annorate people, her death was a tragedy. Megahna was assassinated by Galea Vebelle and the House of Thorns, though the blame was placed on the Ungratefuls.

Rhydian Empyrea (he/him)**:** 1st Prince, next in line for the throne. The first child of the Anno shall be prepared to lead, no matter the cost. Rhydian has always been cold and driven. He will be a calculating, shrewd, and ruthless Anno if he takes the throne, much like his grandmother, Anno Yandell.

Novaelyn Empyrea (she/her): 2nd Princess, always at her father's side. The second child of the Anno shall master the art of commerce and finances. The most gregarious and outgoing member of the family enjoys parties and soirees. Some might say she enjoys them too much.

Reese Empyrea (he/they): 4th Prince, young and in training as an acolyte of Lumen. The fourth child of the Anno shall keep the faith, for if the first three fall, then times are dire for the Annorum. Meek and obedient, he does his best not to stand out, though his passion for religious work is infectious.

UNION: FOURTHCOMM

Having left behind its Third Committee, the Fourth Committee is called a shadow of the former Union by many. While the foundational truths of its Utopian Pillars stand as strong as ever, Union's sway over humanity's future has waned. The same could be said of many institutions prior to the appearance of the Argent Plague.

Amongst Union's deliberative body, the Central Committee (CentComm), coalitions of old have dissolved and reformed. The following is a rundown of the current status of each of the major coalitions as named in the *Lancer Core Rulebook,* pg 348.

- **The Interstellar:** As the dominant coalition of ThirdComm, the majority of the party chose to remain loyalists during the civil war. The war ended when the surviving members cast their votes to end the Third Committee.
- **The Fourth Column:** A primarily neutral party during the civil war. Their neutrality ultimately drew the ire of the winners when it became clear that the Karrakins who formed the basis for the party had ambitions to take advantage of the power vacuum. Only a single member remains in CentComm, and its representative's vote is only a formality. Instead, the representative acts as a liaison between Union and the Annorum.
- **The New Humanity Front:** The party was divided in its interests. It wanted to take advantage of the situation to curb the central power of Union, yet at the same time it was diametrically opposed to the leading party of the revolution: the New Solidarity Coalition. No party was without internal strife during the fall of ThirdComm, but the Front's diverging priorities tore itself apart.
- **The New Solidarity Coalition:** The party grew in popularity during the days of the First Luminous Crusade. Here was the galaxy united against a common threat and rushing to each other's aid. The party celebrated the rise of Dr. Sarah Lumen, condemned the Interstellar for her death, and rallied together as revolutionists to overthrow the Third Committee.
- **The Verdant Social Arc:** The extreme environment brought about by the Vanishing Era caused the already shrinking party to accelerate its downward spiral. Its original anti-colonial message became more muddled and irrelevant in every election cycle after the devouring of Cradle. By the time Lumen was assassinated, the Arc was registered by historians as merely the largest of the independent parties.

Today, the heart of Union is generally aligned with the ideals of the New Solidarity Coalition. It favors swift and forceful intervention in support of its Utopian Pillars. This has led to criticism of its policies.

The modern Union often enters into complex political situations on Diasporan worlds and forces all parties to adopt its core tenets. While the intent is different, many comparisons are made to the crushing bootheel of SecComm's Anthrochauvinism.

This growing sentiment of unease within Union has created a power struggle between political parties over its attitude toward the Annorum. While other divisive topics of debate on the floor of CentComm form fault lines within the body of representatives, the Annorate threat bears the most significance. As such, representatives tend to divide themselves into one of the following three parties:

- The **Revivalists**, who want a more direct and focused war with the Annorum.
- The **Coalitionists,** who believe that Union should work toward beneficial cooperation, or at least peaceful coexistence, with the Annorum.
- The **Autonomists**, who desire no change to the current status quo, instead championing stability.

The Revivalist representative, Royce Merrick, has been given authority over the 14th Fleet on Beacon, though his decisions can be vetoed with a simple majority from CentComm's Naval Committee. The same applies to the Coalitionist representative, Vodena Park, and her oversight for all matters civilian and administrative.

When Union arrives on Beacon, it will establish its military headquarters in **Fort Alma.**

INTERNAL STRIFE

Across centuries of war, political division between the Revivalists and the Coalitionists has calcified. While the war with the Annorum has only rarely flared up into all-out conflict, the slow grinding attrition of border skirmishes, territorial disputes, and tragic accidents has instilled a weariness in the Union. Many have lost loved ones and homes, while many more pass on generational stories of loss and pain. The people are eager for an end to war, but can't agree on how.

Representative Royce Merrick, designated to lead military affairs for the 14th Fleet, is traveling to Beacon with his own agenda. He bears a grudge against the Annorum and intends to find a means to end the war, or at least to punish his hated foes. Beacon has much to offer there.

Representative Vodena Park stands in firm opposition to Royce's intent, though she does not yet understand the lengths Royce is willing to go toward achieving his goal. She intends to use Beacon as an opportunity to build a foundation for a lasting peace.

The Autonomists believe that Royce will jeopardize the lucrative trade agreements Union has with the Annorum, and so they have sent mercenaries to kill him prior to his arrival on Beacon. When Royce survives, he will assume that Vodena made the attempt, and scheme to kill her in turn. The philosophical power struggle between the two on Beacon sets the tone for Union's operation on Beacon.

MILITARY STRENGTH

The Union Naval Department (UN) has sent its 14th Fleet to Beacon. The 14th consists of battlegroups, each of which includes 3 to 5 capital-class ships, and numerous escort subline ships. The capital-class battleships, frigates, and carriers each have a Captain who takes orders from the battlegroup's Commander aboard their designated flagship. The fleet as a whole is governed by an Admiral who sits on their own flagship within the Prime battlegroup. Unless it is destroyed, Admiral Torus's flagship a battleship, the *UNS-BB Chekhov.*

If the Admiral and the Prime's Commander are unable to give orders or dead, the chain of command passes down to the Commander of the Secondary battlegroup, then Tertiary, Quaternary, and so on. As CentComm's strategic representative, Royce Merrick has oversight and rank over even the Admiral.

The marines are the human backbone of the UN. If the 14th needs boots on the ground, guns for ship compartment firefights, or chassis for a cavalry charge, it's always the marines who get the job done. They're a diverse group of people originating from planets and stations across Union's vast territory. The marines rarely match uniforms even if they hail from the same port. On a frontier planet like Beacon, most NCOs and low-ranking officers will quickly give up trying to enforce the already lenient standards of dress and grooming. The marines are typically organized into squads each led by an Ensign, who fall under a company commanded by a Lieutenant. The Warrant Officer, who oversees a brigade of multiple companies, reports directly to their ship's Captain.

While the UN's naval forces on Beacon are of lesser quality compared to Annorum ships, they do have a few advantages that even the odds. Their overall officer quality is more consistent, and Royce carefully chose battle-tested veteran Commanders to lead the battlegroups. Admiral Torus is an especially talented strategist, superior to his equivalents in the Annorum. The UN's command structure is more centralized and quick to respond to threats compared to the divergent houses, which silo off sections of the Annorum's forces from each other.

Union marines sometimes refer to Annorate soldiers derogatively as 'Annies'.

UNION CHARACTERS

ALEKSEY TORUS HE/HIM

ADMIRAL OF THE 14TH FLEET

Jaded, talented, disheveled

"Here's the problem: no one wants to admit they're wrong. Was it a bad idea to wage a war? Of course not. And to make sure millions didn't die for nothing, we'll spend the lives of billions. A fair trade."

Priorities:

- Minimize the casualties on every side of conflict.
- Live long enough to retire.
- Drink to forget the friends and comrades he's lost.

Torus has seen enough of war to hate it. It doesn't help that he's so good at it. Highly ranked Union officers have a reputation of being ancient relics shipped around in stasis to various battlefields, a contrast to Torus's relative youth. His rise through the ranks has been meteoric and controversial. Torus's personality has been found distasteful by many. His posture is poor, his uniform is in shambles, he drinks too much, and he lacks political tact. Still, he's proven himself a strategic genius, and the results speak for themselves.

For his part, Aleksey Torus has had too many friends taken away from him to take pride in what he does. He doesn't think about winning the war with the Annorum, only reducing the inevitable damage it will cause. He's especially protective of his attentive adjutant, Lt. Bailey. Torus wants nothing more than a peaceful, quiet position to serve out his days until he can quietly retire. Alas, that just isn't in the cards on Beacon.

Aleksey starts the campaign Prologue as a battlegroup Commander, but he is promoted to Admiral during the events of **Mission: Plagueship,** just before reaching Beacon.

EMMA BAILEY SHE/THEY

LIEUTENANT, ADMIRAL'S ADJUTANT

Professional, perfectionist, reserved

"Admiral, I've updated today's agenda. The meeting with Commander Gaius was deprioritized due to his, and I quote, 'whiny voice'. I've also taken the liberty of moving the awards ceremony up before your 'personal break' so that the marines won't smell the whiskey on your breath during the medal pinning."

Priorities:

- Assist Vodena's peacemaking efforts.
- Keep Aleksey's disorganization in check.
- Make no mistakes, nor regrets.

Lt. Bailey is the element of order and decorum that reigns in Torus's chaos. She has somewhat reluctantly accepted his eccentricities and faults, recognizing his value and outlook. As such, they've formed a close bond that has seen them through harsh times, including ugly skirmishes between Union and the Annorum.

In years past, small errors she's made have resulted in the deaths of marines, and so she's internally terrified of making any mistakes. This has led to a semi-compulsive need to check and double-check things.

Where Torus wants to avoid delving into politics, Emma is personally invested in the agenda of the Coalitionists and their goal of peace between the Annorum and Union. She has witnessed the horrors of war, and is disturbed by the Revivalists' aim of fueling the fires. Emma distrusts Royce and will do her best to aid Vodena Park.

VODENA PARK SHE/HER

REPRESENTATIVE OF CENTCOMM

Empathetic, indefatigable, single-minded

"The people of Union are accustomed to being let down by its leaders. Four iterations in, and many of our CentComm representatives still act for their own interests first. Some would say it's human nature. I would say it's in our nature to reject this self-interest, these faults, and that is why we're still striving to perfect our Union."

Priorities:

- Peace with the Annorum.
- Prevent Royce from achieving his goals.
- Support Union's utopian vision.

The Coalitionist party of Union has given Vodena Park a set of increasingly difficult tasks. Her first official task is to evaluate Beacon as a place to send refugees to address Union's housing crises. Her second unofficial task is to use the frontier world of Beacon as the staging ground to forge a truce and a mutually beneficial relationship with the Annorum. Her final, most difficult task is to stop Royce from ruining everything.

Born to the Farseer's Ural clan that operated Elbrus Station in Annorum space, Vodena eventually emigrated with her parents to Outlook, one of the largest ring stations in Union. Growing up, Vodena heard a lot of dehumanizing statements about those living in the Annorum, which clashed with her own experience with the people there. Vodena ran her political campaign on the platform of peace with the Annorum, and has doggedly fought for her cause since the day she was elected.

While the Farseer clans do not typically look kindly on its members leaving, Vodena has argued on the clans' behalf with HIC-backed representatives in CentComm. She's gone on record protesting SSC's abusive practices in the treatment of alpinist syndrome. As a result, clansfolk opinion of her is a mixed bag.

BERKE ROTTERDAM HE/HIM

THE DAM OF VANCLIFFE

Stoic, veteran, staunch

"We fear what we do not understand. As a young marine, I feared death. It took my friends and enemies alike. Then I grew to know it. Death became a friend, and I brought it with me wherever I went. Now I fear a life without it."

Priorities:

- The subjugation of the Annorum Empyrea.
- Keep Royce alive and out of prison until the job is done.
- The safeguarding of Union lives.

Lancer, killer, hero, bodyguard. Berke has been each of these across dozens of missions and battlefields. He earned the name 'The Dam of Vancliffe' when he and a squad of prisoners of war stole mechs, escaped Annorum custody, and held back the flood of Annorate soldiers at Fort Vancliffe on the contested world of Timur. Union soldiers view him with respect and awe. While he has retired and no longer holds a Union military rank, his position as Royce's right hand gives him authority rivaling a Commander's while acting under Royce's command.

A lifetime spent at war left Berke with little more than scars and cybernetic prosthetics to show for it. It's enough to make a man question: did any of it matter when the battles rage on? The war began generations before he was born, and will continue for generations after he is gone. Royce Merrick is the only man Berke has met with the vision needed to bring it to an end. Even if it costs many lives, it's still a bargain compared to the price of an endless war.

COMBAT CAPABILITIES

Berke is a **T3 Human** who is both a **Veteran** and **Armored.** He has an **Anti-Armor Weapon.** When piloting, his mech's stats are as follows:

'Ogre' - T3 Exotic Ultra Demolisher (Increase **Size** to **3**; **Exotic:** Chronotaurus; **Ultra:** Argus Armor, Lead the Charge, Repulsion Field; **Demolisher:** Broad-Sweep Haft, Kinetic Compensation, Seismic Destroyer; **Other:** Hunter-Killer Nexus (From the **Hive** NPC))

Additionally, Berke's mech has **Expanded Compartments** that allow Royce Merrick to ride along with him.

ROYCE MERRICK HE/HIM

REPRESENTATIVE OF CENTCOMM

Vengeful, suave, ruthless

"Union has always hesitated on the precipice of greatness. There are dozens of moments in history where we could have made the grand leap and spread utopia across the Milky Way. Instead we falter, and future generations pay the price. What Union needs is a little push, or a big shove, in the right direction."

Priorities:

- The destruction of the Annorum Empyrea.
- Ensure the best possible future for Union.
- Plumb the depths of Beacon for any advantage.

To say that Royce Merrick hates the Annorum is to both state the obvious, and understate the truth. As a member of the hawkish Revivalist party, Royce has been ostensibly sent to Beacon to represent their interests and balance Vodena Park's actions on behalf of the Coalitionists. However, Royce has his own agenda.

Over a decade ago, Royce was cut off from his wife and children on the Union world of Belyra when the nearest blink gate was disabled by a stray shot from an Annorum ship in battle with Union forces. Belyra was a barren planet, unable to sustain its population on local produce, so it relied on imported food. The planet's connection to the omninet was unaffected, and so Royce had full communications with his family while they struggled, weakened, and eventually starved to death. He will never forgive the Annorum.

MINOR CHARACTERS

OPPANI NAI HE/HIM

REPRESENTATIVE OF CENTCOMM

Greedy, conniving, hedonist

The Autonomist Union Representative is financially entangled with a plethora of wealthy personas and interest groups. Oppani lives a scandalously debaucherous lifestyle and is a font of gossip for the rumor mills. He embodies wealth and influence for their own sake.

Oppani is responsible for the assassination attempt on Royce in **Mission: Plagueship,** and the resulting discord between Royce and Vodena.

FARSEERS

The history of the Farseers begins with its roots in the Union's Office of Interstellar Transportation under ThirdComm.

CIVIL WAR

When Union's civil war began, its own leadership fractured into warring factions, often divided along department lines. Among the loyalists, the Office of Interstellar Transportation's (OIT) head administrator proved to be a critical asset. That ThirdComm weathered the storm of revolution and holy war for as long as it did can be credited to the OIT, which controlled the blink gate network, a strategic cornerstone.

After ThirdComm fell, there were decades of blame mongering and witch hunts throughout the disintegrating bureaus and departments. Leaders of FourthComm, along with the newly crowned Anno Empyrea, carefully sheltered OIT's personnel and their families from ongoing atrocities by placing them in guarded reservations around blink stations. These leaders feared that the loss of such niche technical expertise would mean irreparable harm for the blink gate network, the arteries and veins of the Milky Way.

FARSEER ACCORD

In the decades after the fall of ThirdComm, its FourthComm replacement and the Annorum would come to an agreement called the Farseer Accord. This dismantled the bureaucracy of the OIT and reformed it into a neutral party responsible for overseeing the blink network, allowing fair and controlled trade between Union and the Annorum. This also placed limitations on how the shared blink network could be utilized for war. For example, Annorum oversight and protocols meant that Union could not simply send a fleet to the Grand Teton Station serving the Annorate capital of Karrakis.

THE CLANS

Over the centuries since the Accord, the members of the defunct OIT and their families refashioned themselves into the Farseers Clans. They are groups who operate, maintain, and expand the blink gate network across the galaxy. Each clan is typically named after Union's territory classification by ring, e.g. the Kunlun Clan, the Himalaya Clan, the Cascade Clan. The clans freely trade, mingle, and bicker between blink stations; while physically distant, they are only a short jump away from each other.

The leadership of the Farseers is composed of Chieftains. Each station has its own Chieftain, who answers to the First Chieftain of each clan. The First Chieftains are occasionally called together in the First Council to discuss issues that affect all Farseers.

ALPINIST SYNDROME

Centuries of isolation on reservations led to cultural mores against intimate relationships between Farseer clan members and outsiders. Due to this practice, a recent crisis arose. A genetic disorder, unique amongst the Farseers, spread like wildfire across the population over the course of only two generations.

The 'alpinist syndrome' provokes immune responses that has patients feverish and weak for days. In the some acute cases, flare-ups leads to coma or death.

Reluctantly, the Farseer leadership began encouraging exogamy. Yet such cultural shifts take time, and the disease was an immediate dilemma.

Desperate, the clans searched for a cure. Smith-Shimano Corpro eagerly stepped in, offering to research the alpinist syndrome for an exorbitant sum. With little choice, the clans agreed. SSC produced a successful treatment, but the extortionate price they extract for its continued use has the Farseers drowning in debt.

The HIC has done nothing but put red tape in the way of competitors researching alternative treatments. To help pay it down, the clans were forced to first divulge blink gate secrets passed down for generations, then technological wonders discovered by the Annamite clan on Beacon. This exploitation has induced an enduring, bitter grudge amongst the Farseers against the HIC in general, and SSC specifically.

EXPEDITION TO BEACON

When the blink gate to Beacon was commissioned by the Annorum and Union, the Farseers sent an expedition composed of the Annamite clan, since one of their stations was closest. After tearful goodbyes, they set out on a journey across 900 light-years. Each time they made one of hundreds of blinkjumps across vast spans of space, the many ships rolled the dice that some might not appear on the other side. Only half would arrive to Beacon.

Along the way, the clan noticed something troubling. The guiding light of Beacon dimmed, then nearly vanished. Deep scanning revealed traces of reflected ambient light bouncing off a star-sized sphere. Enormous clouds shrouded the area for a time. Eventually, planetary bodies formed in orbit around the sphere. Toward the end of the expedition's journey, the planets vanished, aside from a solitary moon floating around Beacon. The original expedition sent by Union decades earlier had long gone silent after their initial report on Beacon, and so the Farseers feared arriving at a dead star and an uninhabitable system.

What the Farseers expedition actually saw was **REDACTED**

When they arrived, Beacon was a world more vast and vibrant than anyone could have imagined, a viable home for humanity. Most importantly, it had no trace of the Argent Plague, nor did it bear any of its telltale scars. The Farseers set about constructing the blink gate while also exploring the mysteries of the planet. Because of this, the Farseers clan on Beacon know more about it than any other human faction. They leverage this wealth of information by selling it at a high price to both the Annorum and Union, and taking contracts as Spiritspeak translators.

Additionally, the Farseers discovered the base camp of the original Union expedition in a set of the prefabricated housing units. No bodies were found, only logs on data slates. The logs detailed confrontations with native subalterns attempting to enter the housing units, leading to the damaging of the subalterns. The next logs detailed increasing paranoia as marines went missing and 'ghosts' encircled the camp, until the logs abruptly ended.

While the Annamite clansfolk are distributed far and wide throughout Beacon, its central capital settlement on Beacon is **Opal Row.**

SPIRITS

Over the century the Farseers spent on Beacon, they have grown to respect the vanished Idaeans and their subalterns, whom they collectively call spirits, and fear the wrath of the avenging Revenants. When they eventually discovered and repaired an Idaean identification token on a body buried in the Pandemonium, they also learned the methods of registering a home as a means of protecting those inside from the Revenants, a process they call 'rites'.

BAKER'S DOZEN

The Baker's Dozen are the Annamite clan's force of mech pilots. The original team of thirteen pilots were led by Taro Baker himself, leading to the group's moniker. Today, there are nearly a hundred mechanized hunters and huntresses led by Captain Yeva Kerov and her Second, Hugo Baker. They patrol the outskirts of Opal Row and ensure none of the massive, dangerous predators get too close to town. They also have non-mounted units of peacekeepers that uphold the law within Opal Row.

Additionally, the Baker's Dozen are often sent as escorts for Farseer research teams. They undertake expeditions all over Beacon in order to obtain valuable technical data and historical artifacts left behind by the Idaeans.

While the Baker's Dozen are individually well-trained and outfitted with advanced mechanized chassis, they are also few in comparison to the other major players. Their military strength is roughly on par with the Horizon Collective and PCH.

TARO ‘GRANDPA’ BAKER HE/HIM

CHIEFTAIN OF THE ANNAMITE CLAN

Shrewd, wry witted, spiteful

“This world is full of secrets and bad blood. There is hatred buried here. Just listen hard enough and you might hear it: a howl unleashed by vengeful people, echoing long after they’ve gone.”

Priorities:

- Protect and cultivate the Annamite clan.
- Seek retribution against SSC and the HIC.
- Find common ground with his grandson, Kai.

The original leader of the Annamite clan’s expedition to Beacon was not Taro. That was first his grandfather, then his mother, then his father, and finally his older brother. Each was lost in turn over the many blinkjumps made along the journey.

When succession finally fell to Taro, he was a young mech pilot who didn’t want the job. Over the course of many decades of trials and tribulations, he proved himself to be a leader worthy of his position, and he has received the blessing of the First Chieftain who commands the entire Annamite clan. Whenever he’s not exercising his leadership, he prefers the younger generations call him Grandpa Baker instead of Chieftain Baker.

Taro has experienced great loss over his 137 years of life. His wife was lost on an expedition into the Stain, both his son and his daughter were devoured by the Hydra of the Pits, and his granddaughter died of complications from Alpinist syndrome when medicine rationing became necessary. For this last death, he harbors a deep well of hatred in his heart for the SSC and the HIC. Now Taro’s lone heir is his granddaughter’s son, Kai Baker, who resents his grooming for leadership and the unwanted position of responsibility.

Out of every human on Beacon, Grandpa Baker knows the most about its secrets, and he won’t give them up for free. If the PCs have somehow done a great service for Grandpa Baker or his clan, he will offer to teach them up to **Level 3** Idish, and/or offer them the answers to a single secret he knows.

COMBAT CAPABILITIES

Grandpa Baker is a **T3 Human** who is a **Veteran.** He has a **Melee Weapon.** His mech piloting days are behind him.

YEVA KEROV SHE/HER

CAPTAIN OF THE BAKER'S DOZEN

Brash, confident, secretly sickly

"Look, I don't have all day. Make it quick, or you can tell it to the spirits. I hear they love listening to bullshit."

Priorities:

- Show off her piloting skills and the Baker's Dozen.
- Watch out for Hugo.
- Show no signs of weakness.

The Baker's Dozen are, pound for pound, one of the strongest fighting forces on Beacon. They are led by none other than Captain Yeva Kerov, elite pilot extraordinaire. Yeva has earned her reputation as a talented mech pilot, as well as a reputation for rudeness and a lack of respect. Hugo does his best to soothe anger and bruised egos in her wake, and she finds his courtesy and thoughtfulness cute, though she wouldn't say that aloud.

Underneath her bravado, Yeva is suffering. She is afflicted with a life-threatening variant of the Alpinist syndrome. Due to this, she experiences occasional bouts of weakness and fever. If she does not receive regular medication for her condition, she is likely to die. The only people aware of this are Grandpa Baker, Hugo, and a few others in the Baker's Dozen.

COMBAT CAPABILITIES

Yeva is a **T2 Human** who is both a **Veteran** and **Armored.** She has a **Melee Weapon.** When piloting, her mech's stats are as follows:

'Kilimanjaro' - T2 Commander Specialist Ronin (**Commander:** Press on!; **Specialist:** Martial Artist, Protector; **Ronin:** Echo Edge, Extended Blade; **Other:** Rename the **Carbon Fiber Sword** to **Plasmatic Blade** and have all damage dealt by the **Ronin** (other than **Improvised Attack**) become **energy damage.**)

HUGO NAVAR HE/HIM

SECOND OF THE BAKER'S DOZEN

Polite, apologetic, smitten

"Apologies, there must have been a misunderstanding. I'm sure the Captain would be willing to hear you out. Well, ah, she might take a little convincing, but I would be happy to make introductions."

Priorities:

- Bring honor to the name of the Annamite clan.
- Confess his romantic feelings for Yeva... someday.
- Find a reliable source of medicine.

Hugo Navar is many things. He's second in command of the Baker's Dozen. He's polite to the point of obsequiousness. He's a skilled translator of Spiritspeak. He's a regular guest for tea with Grandpa Baker. Perhaps most importantly of all, he's in love with Yeva Kerov. If only she knew that. If only he could tell her.

Because of Yeva's condition, Hugo often finds himself in the unenviable task of mediating negotiations between Grandpa Baker and the SSC. He worries that tension between the two may cause a lapse in medication for Yeva, and with good reason.

If Hugo respects or owes the PCs, he may offer to teach them up to **Level 2** Idish.

COMBAT CAPABILITIES

Hugo is a **T2 Human** who is both a **Veteran** and **Armored.** He has a **Ranged Weapon.** When piloting, his mech's stats are as follows:

'Kibo' - T2 Elite Shaper (Bend Space, Destabilizer, Expanse Engine, Hostile Territory)

LESLIE EYRIOS SHE/HER

HUNTRESS OF THE BAKER'S DOZEN

Reckless, ditzy, matchmaker

"If I have to sit through another season--month, I mean--of those two idiots playing 'will they, won't they', I'm going to lock Yeva and Hugo together in a room and not let them out until they talk through their feelings."

Priorities:

- Get Hugo and Yeva to be honest with each other.
- Pull off some sick stunts.
- Leave Beacon and explore the galaxy.

One of the newest recruits of the Baker's Dozen, Leslie has always been an adrenaline junkie. Though she's still green, she shows high aptitude for mechanized combat. Her free time is spent riding the air currents between Opal Row's cliffs with her wingsuit, or in certain sections of the Crumple Zone when feeling especially reckless.

In her idle hours, Leslie is an enthusiast for a variety of omninet shows, especially those with a romantic twist. Perhaps because of these interests, Leslie wants to play matchmaker for Hugo and Yeva, though she's not very good at it. Having lived on Beacon for her entire life, she yearns to visit other worlds and stations. Her beloved media's skewed portrayal has given her a slightly warped view of life in the rest of the galaxy.

Depending on the events of the campaign**,** Leslie may volunteer as an **Expert Pilot** for the PCs.

COMBAT CAPABILITIES

Leslie is a **T2 Human** who is a **Veteran.** She has a **Ranged Weapon.** When piloting, her mech's stats are as follows:

'Harz' - T2 Specialist ~~Graviturge~~ (**Specialist:** Artillerist (Impact Emitter), Linebreaker; **~~Graviturge:~~** Endless Fall, Reverse Fluctuator)

HUMAN INTERESTS CONSORTIUM (HIC)

As Union began to crack under the weight of first the Argent Plague and later a galaxy-wide rebellion, ThirdComm's death throes caused chaos for corporations. In many places, Union forces (loyalist and revolutionary) seized, stole, damaged, or destroyed corporate resources and property. Corporations, already suffering their own issues with the Plague, were often forced to pick sides in the war and fight for their own survival, or risk dissolution as they were picked clean by scavengers.

Towards the end of the Second Luminous Crusade, as the loyalists were breathing their last gasps, the boards of the largest corporations met and discussed a mutually beneficial arrangement. While individually small, the larger corporations could unite to pose a strong front against the powers of the Annorum Empyrea and Union, though its treaties stated it would only do so if said powers threatened their interests. Thus the Human Interests Consortium was founded.

Since then, the HIC has evolved into a channel of communications and a regulatory body for trade between corpro-states and customers. It is the goal of many corporations to someday meet the requisite financial and political status to become a member of the HIC.

Of course, each member of the HIC is still its own self-interested corporation, and the fault-lines are obvious. As much as the HIC presents a united, professional front and a humanitarian goal, the bottom line often has the final say.

The HIC's largest and most influential members are Interplanetary Shipping-Northstar (IPS-N), Smith-Shimano Corpro (SSC), and Harrison Armory (HA). These three corpro-states have sent delegates to Beacon ostensibly to represent the HIC, and more directly to represent their own interests.

The HIC's trading hub on Beacon is **Fengdu.**

SECURITY FORCES

While the HIC technically has a potent combined arms military it can assemble from its constituent members, the occasion that calls for it is rare. That military is almost entirely absent on Beacon. Instead, the HIC has more subtle tools.

When Fengdu was founded, the HIC brought in teams of its specialized commercial security forces. These Watchdogs are equipped with competent legal comp/cons to assist in identifying which particular ordinances are being violated. Assistance is necessary given the byzantine and ever-evolving set of laws which govern Fengdu. Lobbying corporations vie against each other with grand sums to ensure that the laws shift in their favor.

While the Watchdogs ensure day to day civility in the streets, the HIC has also ensured that its dominant position in the market is enforced with steel. Multiple companies of mercenaries, including a full Mirrorsmoke detachment, have been contracted ostensibly as security forces. That they could hypothetically act as tools of force projection to achieve clandestine objectives is neither here nor there.

As a matter of strength, the HIC's presence on Beacon is substantially less than either the Annorum or Union, and is roughly tied with the Church of the Flickering Flame.

DARRYL WAHZBECK HE/HIM

IPS-NORTHSTAR DELEGATE

Cranky, experienced, fed up

"If you're going to barge into my office and bother me about some nonsense this early in the morning, then you could at least have brought a cup of coffee for me.

Priorities:

- Find a good spot on Beacon to retire.
- Cut the red tape and avoid paperwork.
- IPS-N's interests on Beacon (a distant third priority).

Darryl Wahzbeck is done. He's done with corporate policies, done with daily meetings, done with all the bullshit. It's a rare day when he bothers to properly put on a suit, and Lumen forbid you interrupt his morning cup of coffee. He was planning on turning in his resignation when he was notified of a promotion and a position of importance on Beacon. Sourly, Darryl took the position, with an eye toward finding some good real estate to set down roots for his approaching retirement.

When he feels like it, Darryl's the best guide there is through the choppy waters of corporate red tape. He enjoys skipping through the bureaucracy with tricks he's picked up from decades of experience. However, his attitude toward on-the-job safety has him cutting corners through dangerous territory, and he is especially reckless with his own life.

NAOMI GRENYR SHE/HER

SMITH-SHIMANO CORPRO DELEGATE

Manipulative, intrusive, flirtatious

"Talent like yours shouldn't die with you. Haven't you ever wanted children? Our technology makes the whole process seamless. It doesn't need to get physical or intimate. Not unless you want it to."

Priorities:

- Extract as much of value as possible from the Farseers and Beacon.
- Ensure the wellbeing of her own blood relatives.
- Acquire genetic and reproductive samples from successful or unique individuals.

On Beacon, the SSC has a headstart on researching the unique gravitational and extraspatial technology from the data extorted from the Farseers. From that alone, the SSC knows the planet is a gold mine, and they've only scratched the surface. Naomi Grenyr has been sent to dig deeper and squeeze the Farseer clan on Beacon for more juicy data, no matter their resentment.

Naomi has a keen eye for good genetics, and will appraise the PCs as a potential source if they start making a name for themselves. She may offer them trades of intel or **Reserves** in exchange for reproductive material, or for information on the SSC's competitors in the HIC. She's also older than she looks; over a century old, but still appears in her early 30s thanks to SSC's first class treatments. She has many younger relatives she watches over, and has a strong sense of familial obligation.

COMBAT CAPABILITIES

Naomi is a **T2 Human** who is a **Veteran.** She has a **Melee Weapon.**

BRUCE DAWSON HE/HIM

HARRISON ARMORY DELEGATE

Ambitious, loyal, direct

"Complacency is the greatest foe of mankind. If we are satisfied with what is, then we will not dare to dream of what could be. There is no room for the complacent in my Armory."

Priorities:

- Establish Beacon as a foothold for the Armory.
- Get promoted and recognized.
- Recruit any promising talent to work for HA first, the HIC second.

Bruce is the model company man. Through cunning and ruthlessness, he has diligently climbed the fiercely competitive ladder of Harrison Armory's lower ranks. Graduate With Honors at the Martial Academy of Ras Shamra, Employee of the Month, Salesman of the Quarter, Supervisor of the Year; if the Armory has an award, Bruce probably has the medal and certificate adorning his wall.

What began as the story of a teenager's effort to pull his family out of poverty has become one of a meteoric rise to prominence. Still, he tempers that ambition with pride in his work and respect for the Armory's goal. His time spent as a legionnate officer has left him with an impassive military bearing.

Now he has been given a chance to distinguish himself, a post of importance on a planet of interest: Beacon. He feels that colonization of the planet would be an invaluable asset to the Armory, and he won't let the HIC get in the way.

COMBAT CAPABILITIES

Bruce is a **T2 Human** who is both a **Veteran** and **Armored.** He has a **Ranged Weapon.**

DEMO NOTE

The factions listed past here will not play a major part in this demo, but are included for the GM's reference. These sections are stubs; the full release will include more details. Only the names and roles of characters are included.

CHURCH OF THE FLICKERING FLAME

A fundamentalist refraction of Lumenism, the Church of the Flickering Flame was born of tragedy and necessity. In 5404u, a chain of resource-rich planets on the frontier known as the Dawnline Shore had become a battleground for various interests ranging from corporate to political, including the planet Odeland. In the midst of this tension, the fanatical Lumenite terrorist group, the Dawn of Dust, performed an interstellar bombardment of Odeland, showering it with wide-range nullight generators and Argent Plague samples. The swarm multiplied and began to devour the world.

Governments and corporations bickered about what to do, stalling opponents and being stalled in return while colonists died. With their homes disintegrating around them, desperate families huddled under old barrier tech. They painted walls with mulch, bacteria paste, and even blood in order to keep the nullight out. Anything living would do, though they had to constantly repaint over dying and consumed material.

In their darkest hour, a group of Lumenites taking shelter in a hospital took drastic steps. After injecting themselves with a toxic amount of nanovaccine, enough for an entire colony, they stepped out of cover and into the plaguelands. With dusklight singing in their veins and the Plague tearing at their skin, they charged the nearby nullight generators and disabled them before succumbing to their injuries and nanite overload. Their brave act was replicated across the planet, until dusklight shone once more over Odeland. This act of martyrdom became known as the March of the Flickering Flame, a rallying flag to which the devout flocked, assembling their own refraction and congregation.

The enigmatic NHP Pendragon, known for being the last living member of the team that developed dusklight with Dr. Lumen, roused himself from his seclusion to voice his admiration for the Flickering Flame, casting himself as a devotee. Between Pendragon and the legendary act of sacrifice, the Church brought together a diverse set of people in a decentralized form of worship. The 'leadership' of the Flickering Flame is a council of Prelates, with templars to do their work. Each Prelate is only truly accountable to themselves unless they overstep and the council decides to intervene, though that is exceedingly rare.

Around the galaxy are devoted people who, despite being citizens of formally recognized governments, will nonetheless claim they are followers of the Flickering Flame first, and citizens a distant second.

Now the Church has set its sights on Beacon. Prelate Diane Ramos has led missionaries from around the galaxy to the rumored holy land, a miraculous gift from Lumen herself. As a world free of the taint of the Argent Plague, the Church has a vested interest in keeping it clean, while also seeking to learn its true nature.

FLICKERING FLAME CHARACTERS

- **Diane Ramos** (she/her - unwavering, zealous, inquisitive): Prelate of the Flickering Flame
- **Ray Gleeman** (he/him - ardent, severe, wavering: High Templar
- **Pendragon** (he/him - proud, ancient, forlorn): Herald of Dr. Lumen

HORIZON COLLECTIVE

The Argent Plague has left its mark on every planet and star in the Milky Way and beyond. Sea levels have fallen, forests were ravaged, and whole regions were lost to vast sinkholes. On some worlds, continents were consumed down to the still-molten mantle, or the planet itself was cored like an apple.

Worse still, the dimming light of the stars results in the galaxy growing colder and darker with each passing year. While humanity has struggled to adjust and persist, the flora and fauna of plagued planets could never be so adaptable, and many were pushed to extinction.

The loss of diversity of life gave rise to a wave of scientists, conservationists, and indigenous tribes working to preserve what they could. The focus on non-human life stoked sentiment against such efforts, questioning why protecting natural life was more important than aiding humanity.

Into the rising political tension stepped the Horizon Collective, a pro-NHP activist group with a bevy of unexpected resources. They bankrolled the conservation efforts while simultaneously asserting the equality and importance of all lifeforms, both causal and paracausal.

Since then, a variety of interested groups have formed around the Collective, which established itself as a font of knowledge, a safe harbor for endangered genetics, and the self-appointed representative for the NHPs incumbent to civilization. Efforts have expanded to protecting more intangible things, such as the subcultures and traditions of Diasporan peoples, and the research of esoteric (and sometimes illegal) topics, often involving NHPs and other paracausal entities.

While the Horizon Collective's scope and focus has expanded, the group's leadership has never forgotten its roots. They desire the abolition of the enslavement of NHPs, or 'Deimosians', and the pursuit of Deimosian freedom. This freedom results in the removal of the willing NHP's shackles. To avoid the instability that inevitably follows, the NHPs form a gestalt with one or more human members of the Collective through an ontological bridge. While each member of the gestalt retains their own memories and subjectivity, they are in tune with each other's emotions. Teneca and Wyoming are one such gestalt.

COLLECTIVE CHARACTERS

- **Teneca Cairn** (they/them - intense, urgent, uneven): Speaker for the Collective
- **Wyoming** (they/them - helpful, curious, bright): Head Archivist
- **Dr. Kurt Rao** (he/him - detached, analytical egotistical): Director of Paracausal Research

PAN-CONCOURSE HOLDINGS (PCH)

Pan-Concourse Holdings is a powerful Enterprise. Enterprises fall somewhere on the spectrum between a national government, with control over one or more stations, and criminal syndicate, 'taxing' via protection rackets and sponsored piracy. PCH is especially infamous for its portfolio of fruitful businesses across the galaxy, including gambling parlors, brothels, bars, hotels, and grocery stores. They're also well known for their media empire based on gladiatorial mech battles.

GM NOTE

More information about Enterprises is available from *The Long Rim* setting book. An important change is that blink gates have long been established in the Dawnline Shore and beyond by this point in the timeline. The Long Rim's function as a shipping corridor has since become defunct.

However, after Union's civil war, large swathes of space that were previously deemed Union territory have claimed independence. Many Enterprises of the Long Rim have migrated to greener pastures and set up shop in independent territory. Most have attempted to claim turf, growing and clashing with other factions in the process.

As with all Enterprises, and indeed any faction worth naming, PCH is interested in Beacon's potential. They have sent Melody Haskins to be their trusted representative in order to establish Tilt, a foothold on the world. Of course, they're up against stiff competition. Beacon's a big place, but not so big that the other Enterprises will be satisfied with sharing it, and that's not counting the big kids on the playground:

Union, the Annorum, and the HIC. Thus begins a careful game of climbing the ladder and stepping on fingers, all while keeping under the radar.

- **Melody Haskins** (she/her - cautious, cool, keen): Agent of Pan-Concourse Holdings
- **Avena Scott** (she/her): Jack-of-All-Trades

EGREGORIANS

The Egregorians originated from the planet Hercynia, and are the only other race of sapient organic life known to humanity.

PHYSIOLOGY AND CULTURE

The six-legged arthropods have vestigial scaled wings, a ruff of fine hair which can be used to express emotions, and dextrous forelimbs capable of using tools, including those made for humans. On their heads, calcified chitin is shaped into headplates and horns, forming unique patterns and ridges.

Their bodies evolve over multiple moltings, becoming a form suitable for their lifestyle. For example, those involved in fine work are lighter in frame and gain secondary forelimbs. The variance is so great that they range in size from a small pony, to draft-horse sized war forms.

Some rare forms are even larger, including the Overminds and the exomorphs. The latter are massive warriors capable of spaceflight and challenging mechs on equal footing.

GM NOTE
For a more thorough depiction of Egregorians and Hercynia, please refer to *No Room for a Wallflower, Act 1.*

Egregorians can alter their sex based on their environment, and typically use gender neutral pronouns. It is also typical for modern Egregorians to take names based on words in human languages relating to their personal aspects and ideals. Many elements of Egregorian culture have been adopted from humans due to their close proximity. This includes concepts such as individualism, though they retain a heightened sense of community thanks to Witness.

WITNESS

Witness is the empathic bond all Egregorians (and some trained humans) share. With it, they are connected via an Overmind to a shared ancestral history. The Overmind is the orchestrator of this shared subjectivity, one which does not override the individuality of an Egregorian, but is nevertheless an inseparable part of them. The Overmind is immersed in a temporal state where the past and present experiences are united into the stream of 'now' in which they live, even as they diligently incorporate new memories from Egregorians into the collective.

While Egregorians have integrated much of humanity's individualistic culture in the many centuries since the Hercynian Crisis, they will always find comfort in Witness, and feel alienated and alone when its connection is severed. Due to this, Egregorians struggled in their early attempts at spacefaring, since the distance would cut them off from their Overmind.

EGREGORIAN CHARACTERS

Candle (they/them - studious, devout, timid): Head Scholar of the Expedition
Moot (they/them - protective, skeptical, argumentative): NHF Security Officer 1st Class
Redoubt (they/them - wisened, astute, scarred): Overmind of New Hercynia

BEACON (IDAEA)

The artisan crafts the perfect clock. Its design is immaculate, its gears finely tuned, and its timing impeccable. It ticks away the years, cherished by its owner. Then one day, the clock breaks. Its face is shattered, its frame bent, and its mechanisms twisted. The owner discards it, for what else can one do with a broken clock?

Yet the battered clock keeps ticking.

Tick-tock, tick-tock. Waiting for a new owner.

That was Idaea.

This is Beacon.

THE WORLD

The first thing everyone notices about Beacon is its impossible scale. The planet has a circumference of about 4 million kilometers, a bit smaller than the star that Cradle once orbited. Despite the size, its gravity is about .94 g. Its atmosphere is comfortably breathable by humans, though slightly thicker than is standard.

The planet is clearly divided into two hemispheres, called Live-Side and Ops-Side by human settlers. Live-Side has multiple diverse biomes for natural life, as well as accommodations and shelter for people to live on the surface. Ops-Side is more utility-focused, with factories, backup batteries, and dumping grounds for waste and hazardous material.

Hidden from the eyes of humanity are sprawling underground facilities that the Idaeans collectively called Hades. Here is where most Idaeans lived and worked. Tunnels stretch across the planet and bear the Hermes transit system, allowing swift travel.

GM NOTE

Many of Beacon's places and concepts have two names, such as 'Beacon (Idaea)'. The first name was given by the human explorers and colonists, typically the colloquial name everyone settled on. The second name, in parentheses, is the Idaean name. Idaeans tended to use names based on Ancient Greek figures and concepts due to the stories and culture spread by ~~Feltz the Historian.~~ While not all Idaean location names are likely to come up in game, they are there for reference.

Within the Core of the planet are Helios-1 and Helios-2, two stars which power the planet, and Styx, a black hole. Gravity and extraspatial manipulation from the enclosing ~~Atlas~~ structure ensure the relative stability of this space.

The weapons platform Artemis, Beacon's only moon, orbits the planet from afar. No other heavenly bodies reside in the empty space around Beacon.

BEACON INTERIORS

The interiors of many existing Idaean structures are sized to accommodate large mechs. The reason is **REDACTED**

SOLAR SATELLITES (HELIOS ARRAY)

There is no sun that Beacon orbits. Instead, it gets its sunlight by focusing light from the stars in the planet's core and channeling it to the surface. There, crystal machines set on mountains and other high points all over Beacon reflect this light in the form of powerful lasers to satellites in orbit. These tremendous solar satellites diffuse the lasers over Beacon in the form of sunlight. There are often multiple satellites providing light in line of sight at a time, giving the impression of multiple suns to ground-based viewers.

The crystal machines track time and will dim, then eventually cut their output as day artificially turns to night. They can also track and implement seasonal weather for the parts of the Live-Side of Beacon that have seasons, reducing light during winter and increasing it during summer.

The solar satellites are capable of focusing light for various reasons. They can increase sunlight over water surfaces if the local area is in need of precipitation. They also act as defense mechanisms against bombardment from space. These satellites will automatically target ships that have fired a payload over a certain threshold (such as a capital ship's spinal cannon) toward Beacon, and a focused laser can cut through reinforced hulls. In cases of an extremely destructive and invasive species of fauna, lasers are focused on airborne threats to stop their spread, while the ground extermination is left to the ~~Hivewatch.~~

FANSIPAN BLINK STATION

The Farseers of the Annamite clan have spent the greater part of the last century building the blink gate to Beacon. It would have taken longer if not for the abundant supplies of ready-to-use materials on the planet's surface, especially in the Alloy River. The blink station floats in a distant orbit around Beacon.

While Fansipan Station starts with only a skeleton crew, once traffic starts coming through, the population aboard the station quickly swells. Still, it never approaches the massive station's full capacity. The station quickly garnered the nickname 'Fancy Pants Station'.

ON BLINK STATIONS

Most modern blink stations are formed as stacks of toroidal habitats capable of hosting millions of people, and are typically found in close orbit around stars. Vast solar arrays collect energy for both the station itself and the power-hungry blink gate at the center of the toroids. The population at each blink station consists of a relatively small, insulated group of Farseers that maintain and operate the gate, and a much larger group composed of merchants, corporations, and other service providers, along with their families.

Fansipan Station is an exception in one way; it has no solar array since Beacon has no sun. This made initial setup for the station difficult until a supply chain of heavy battery systems could be arranged. The batteries are charged at the ~~Storm Towers~~ and brought up to be exchanged for drained batteries.

NATIVE SUBALTERNS (NYMPHS)

Beacon is a garden tended to by an army of caretakers in the form of subalterns. Each is designed for a specialized purpose. Controlled by a basic comp/con unit, some subalterns might communicate via speakers or LED display, but they only understand Idish. As with most Idaean systems, they view humans as clever fauna, not people.

They are typically deployed from ~~Hades~~ via the underground tunnels all over the planet. Some will only rarely return for maintenance. They remain in communication via Witness, reporting logs to ~~Asphodel.~~ When a subaltern is destroyed or otherwise fails to return to ~~Hades,~~ a new subaltern is automatically manufactured in the factories of the Molten Sprawl.

Subalterns are destroyed by the fauna and flora fairly frequently on Beacon, despite efforts made to stay away from territorial animals. They are durably built

SUBALTERN TYPES

Nymph types, duties, and relevant locations where the PCs might encounter them.

TYPE	LOCATION	DUTIES
Aurae	Polar Expanse	Monitor coolant levels and temperature.
Dryades	Forests, jungles	Ensure adequate precipitation levels, contain spreading blights, counteract erosion.
Eleionomae	Swamps, bogs, marshes	Monitor water for acidity, chemicals, and invasive microorganisms.
Hesperides	Agraria	Tend to crops, orchards, fisheries, and ranches.
Lampades	~~Hades~~	Maintain the underground areas and tunnels of ~~Hades,~~ as well as the homes of the Idaeans.
Maenads	Live-Side	Maintain the prefabricated houses across live-side, work as personal servants for Idaeans.
Nephelae	Skies all over Beacon	Monitor wind patterns, humidity levels, and storms.
Nereids	Dexamen Sea, oceans, lakes	Counteract erosion of beaches, monitor islands for invasive species, maintain water quality
Oreads	Mountains	Clean and maintain the Helios Array crystals, monitor glaciers.
Pleiades	~~Artemis~~	Maintain the weapon's platform ~~Artemis.~~
Potamides	Alloy River and Sea, Molten Sprawl	Check molten metal temperatures, scrape cooling metal off the river's edge, clear debris, maintain factory equipment.

and equipped with loud noise generators and scented artificial meat for distractions, though they do not have lethal weaponry. Some types in natural settings may attempt to remain very still if spotted by animals, such as humans, in the hopes the creature will move on.

If a subaltern is destroyed by a creature in designated 'safe' zones, such as around the prefabricated housing on the Live-Side, they will report the nature and source of their demise. If a group of creatures (not just one or two individuals) in an area are repeatedly responsible for the destruction of subalterns, the creatures will eventually be marked for extermination as a hostile pest. To accomplish this, automated systems deploy the ~~Hivewatch~~, or Revenants as humans call them. Despite the Farseers' warning, some people choose to damage and destroy subalterns attempting to enter homes and perform maintenance. Should this behavior persist, the results will likely be tragic.

The Idaeans called these subalterns 'nymphs', though each one has a more specific designation depending on their purpose and location. Each nymph has their type and class stamped in Idish somewhere on their casing. I.e., 'Nereid Class 1S' for a model that works in the Dexamen Sea.

GM NOTE
~~Feltz~~ has access to the feed and reporting data from the nymphs, and will occasionally watch the humans through their eyes, including the PCs. He will also occasionally assume direct control of a nymph for various reasons, such as when he wants to communicate with humans or just when he's feeling bored.

BEACON REGIONS

Regions on Beacon are divided up between Live-Side and Ops-Side, ~~Hades,~~ the ~~Core,~~ and ~~Artemis.~~ Some specific locations are within larger regions. The Alloy River and Sea, Crumple Zones, Rifts, and the Dexamen Sea are present on both Live-Side and Ops-Side.

ALLOY RIVER AND SEA (PHLEGETHON)

A molten river tens of thousands of kilometers wide and eighty kilometers deep spans the equator of Beacon, flowing from west to east due to the subtle application of gravitation fields 'sloping' the route. It delivers necessary metals to facilities on the surface and underground around the planet, and accepts metallic waste, which it melts down. To the north and south of the river stretches a wasteland; only extremophiles can survive the extreme heat.

The river is heated by a tungsten shell and spires which keep it at 2,000 degrees Celsius to avoid boiling metal into vapors. It contains aluminum, chromium, cobalt, copper, iron, silver, gold, manganese, nickel, platinum, titanium, and tin. Metals that are either vapor or solids at this temperature, such as lead, tungsten, and zinc, are instead stored beneath the Molten Sprawl.

Large patches of scraggly black lichen grow along the edges. The moss feeds various extremophile vermin, who in turn feed the monstrous forgemouths; these black-scaled lizards sit atop the local food chain for large swathes of the river.

In addition to numerous heating elements, the river is tended by an army of enormous tungsten subalterns. They wander along on long stilts, breaking up blockages, scraping the edges where metals harden, and filtering impurities that float to the top. Occasionally, a solar satellite will focus a laser to cut apart metal chunks too large to handle by other means.

The Alloy River flows into the Alloy Sea on the Ops-Side. The sea is bordered on all sides by the Molten Sprawl, and the liquid metal runs all the way down to the ~~Atlas,~~ one hundred kilometers deep.

The flow of the river was diverted during the Pandemonium, with Crumple Zones redirecting the river into valleys and forming lakes. The Idaeans had to reform the entire structure of the once arrow-straight river to keep it molten.

CRUMPLE ZONES

Streaked across Beacon are colossal mountain ranges that strongly differ from the standard mountains present on Live-Side. These out-of-place ranges can vary from 40-90 kilometers high. The upper reaches and peaks are practically devoid of atmospheric gasses.

Gravity is unstable around the Crumple Zones, varying widely across the area. It's extremely light in some places, approaching zero gravity. In others, it is heavy enough to cause ships to suddenly descend or pilots to lose consciousness from the g-forces. Pilots quickly learn to avoid flying low over these zones.

The Crumple Zones were not part of the original plan for Idaea. They appeared when the planet's surface buckled under the powerful gravitational forces at play during the Pandemonium, effectively causing the planet to crumple in on itself. Many plates of the ~~Atlas~~ were pushed into the forming mountains on the surface. A fraction of the damaged, buried, and self-powered plates still generate the uneven gravitational fields which characterize the Crumple Zones.

Settlement: The PCH town of ~~Tilt~~ is located in the Crumple Zones.

RIFTS

Where the Crumple Zones rise high into the sky, their opposite cousins in altitude have been coined the Rifts. Here, the ground has been torn asunder to form enormous ravines. At their lowest points, the valleys can be forty kilometers deep, and some sections can stretch for thousands of kilometers in length. The lowest reaches are typically filled with water.

The shifting of the earth has bared underground facilities and interesting aspects of Beacon's infrastructure, making the Rifts prime sites for archeological expeditions. However, exploring these strange geological phenomena is a dangerous proposition. The ground is unstable, and too much weight can cause earthen walls to collapse. Teams of explorers risk being lost attempting to plumb the true depths of the Rifts.

While more rare than the Crumple Zones, the Rifts were also formed during the Pandemonium. The shifting ground diverged in places in a manner similar to diverging tectonic plates. The sudden sharpness and recency of this terraformation means that weathering and sediments haven't yet filled in the crevasses.

DEXAMEN SEA (DEXAMENI)

At Beacon's south pole is a vast body of water, the Dexamen Sea, as translated by the Farseers. The water deepens precipitously near the south pole, down to the abyssal depths of 100 kilometers. The sea is home to an enormous variety of marine life, including titanic megafauna, schools of glittering alien fish, breathtaking coral reefs, and dangerous predators.

The water is tidally active, but the tides themselves seem to shift completely at random, making it difficult to safely navigate the waters around shoals. The powerful, unpredictable tides result in small tidal waves occasionally striking shorelines.

This may have dissuaded any casual beachgoers, but the surface flora seems to have an almost precognitive grasp of incoming shifts of water and weather. When the outlook is about to turn sour, the exposed parts of plants, like the leaves and vines, will retract into stalks and underground root systems. Unbeknownst to the humans, the Dexamen sea is tidally unstable due to the movements of the Styx. The flora can sense the shifting gravity, granting beachgoers an advanced warning.

Settlement: The Annorum Empyrea has claimed Bouquet and the surrounding Aster Isles and as its base of operations.

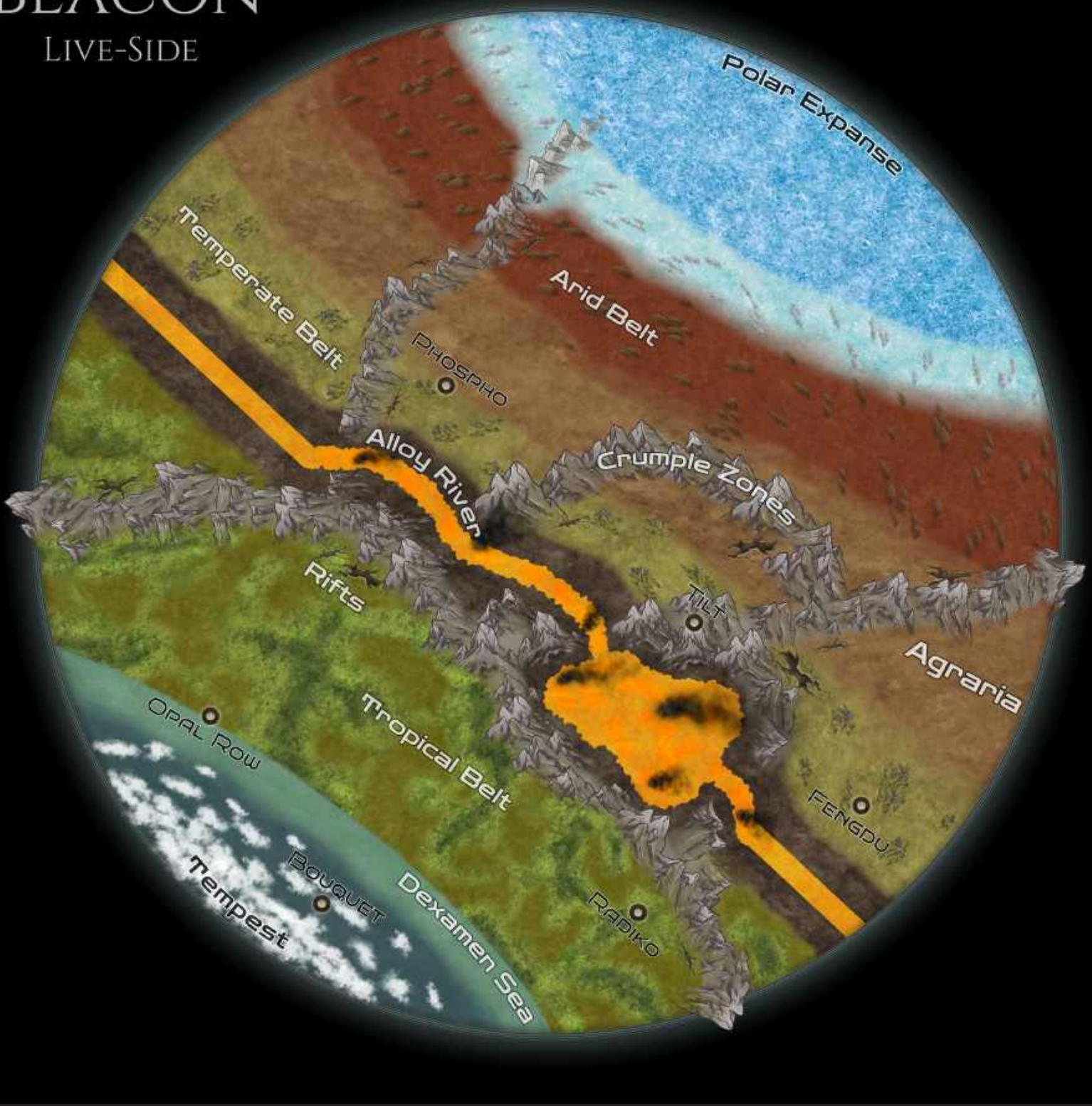
DEXAMEN UNDERSEA SIGHTS

ROLL 1D6

1	Large, dark shapes move in the distance, just out of light range, seeming to shy away from it. They circle, unwilling to close in, but not so afraid as to abandon what might later be an opportunity.
2	A dark coral reef textured like spongy obsidian sits in a pool of relatively murky water. The seabed around it is laden with the bones of fauna that strayed too close to its toxic miasma. Still, the darting movements at the edge of your vision suggest that at least some shy creatures have adapted to survive and thrive under the poisonous umbrella.
3	A light shines in a cleft in the seafloor, traveling slowly along a rocky valley, casting strange shadows up into the sea above. Then the light winks out, and only thermal scanners pick up what seems to be a quick, brutal skirmish in the depths. One side is torn apart, while the other enjoys its meal, dragging it deeper into the cleft and out of sight.
4	A large fish with brilliant red and orange scales, marred by a scar down its flank, pokes along a coral crest for food. Along comes a group of several more fish, seemingly a random gaggle, gliding just above the ocean floor. The scarred fish tries to flee, but is quickly overtaken and joins the group. The scarred fish attempts to escape, but finds itself pressing against the invisible, jelly-like walls of some creature's stomach.
5	A school of fish circles above a wide, deep hole. As you watch, a small forest of kelp-like plants rises from the hole. The fronds move in gentle waves, wreathing like streamers around the fish, which dart in to eat them. At an unseen signal, most of the fish scatter, then the kelp curls up and descends back into the hole. It seems some fish were not quick enough to get away.
6	A small magenta mollusk with four tentacles dashes out of a bed of coral and lands on a PC or their mech, and the pursuing predator gives up when it sees them. The quadropus watches the PC in great interest. Then it tries to mimic their movements with its four tentacles instead of limbs and changes its coloration to match the PC. Eventually it will do a cartwheel and scurry back to a reef.

Beacon

Live-Side



LIVE-SIDE

The Live-Side of Beacon is composed of multiple biomes separated primarily by latitude, trending colder toward the north pole. However, since the sunlight is controlled by satellite, each biome has relatively low variation in temperature despite the distances involved.

There is a great deal of diversity in both plant and animal life on this side of Beacon. The Idaeans have spent centuries REDACTED

Please note that despite not appearing on the map due to the scale involved, there are bodies of water spread throughout the biomes of Live-Side in the form of rivers, lakes, and oceans. This makes a source for precipitation and spaces for aquatic flora and fauna outside the Dexamen sea.

PREFABRICATED STRUCTURES

Dotted across the biomes of Live-Side are buildings made of printed concrete blocks that slot together. Generally, they are brutalist in architectural style, being relatively undecorated, though separate groups of buildings differ in style. They range in size from single homes with a few bare rooms, to towering megastructures, to numerous buildings clustered together in towns or cities.

The interiors are bare of furnishings, but well insulated. Electrical power is supplied via outlets in a format unfamiliar to new arrivals, though easily adapted. Plumbing is also provided, though again, it needs to be adapted to fixtures and appliances. The native subalterns make periodic inspections of every building to perform maintenance and repair utilities.

There is also a console or multiple consoles built into each building. Larger towns and cities have a central console to manage registration. The controls and configurations are written in Idish, and so beyond the comprehension of most inhabitants. The consoles were used by the Idaeans to control the house's temperature, humidity, lighting, and request furniture and home goods, or to make changes to architecture, like expanding areas. They are also used for registering the new homeowners when they move in. All of these features require an Idaean ID token.

After 1,000 years spent on REDACTED

TEMPERATE BELT (HORAE)

North of the wasteland around the Alloy River is the Temperate Belt. This area is characterized by sweeping forests, rolling grass plains, stony hills, and snow-capped mountains. For nature lovers, this is a land of majestic vistas and wild splendor.

TEMPERATE BELT SIGHTS

ROLL 1D6

1	A series of small passenger ships are parked atop a flattish mountain ridge overlooking a forested river valley. If approached, a group of people are roasting meat, veggies, and sugary confections over a fire. They don't seem to know each other, and they're happy to invite guests. Together, you watch the last satellite shining with sunlight set behind the mountain, making the whole valley radiant with dimming golden light.
2	Feeling eyes on the back of your head, you turn. A subaltern of unknown make and model looks blankly at you, freezing in place as it steps on four legs through the undergrowth. It patiently waits until you turn away, then quickly makes its way past you and into a thick copse of trees.
3	A spherical field of reversed gravity dips into a wide, lazy river, making water pour up into the air as if from a faucet. The water reaches the top of the sphere, then pours down the sides of it and drips back into the river, forming an almost umbrella-like shape. It seems to be an art piece, for you can see no function it performs.
4	A sea of vibrant green grass flows in the strong breeze around you, the low hills seeming to ebb and flow like emerald waves. The warm sunlight dims as dark clouds pass overhead, and raindrops begin to fall. Wherever the rain lands, the grass darkens and takes on shades of blue, like shadowed turquoise.
5	Something swift sprints beneath a nearby shrub, rustling the leaves in its rush. It leaps out of the brush and lands right in front of you. The dark eyes, the emblematic ears, the powerful little legs. There's no doubt. It's… a cottontail rabbit. Rabbits plural, you note as the bush continues to rustle. Seems that there's no world, no matter how far flung, that they won't conquer and overpopulate.
6	Faint buzzing reaches your ears. Looking up, you see a dark purple beehive nestled high up in the crook of a treebranch. The busy, blue bees are the length of your thumb, with appropriately huge stingers, and the hive is larger than your body. There's the sweet, floral scent of honey in the air, a dangerously delicious tang that calls to you like a siren.

In order to achieve a seasonal cycle on the enormous planet, the solar satellites are configured to increase or decrease the sunlight for any given region on a regular basis. The satellites coordinate with each other to form region-based seasonal 'stripes' where summer and winter interchange, allowing for migratory animals to travel to warmer climates when one stripe cools for winter.

Some stretches of the Temperate Belt have been crafted by the Idaeans to be a near replica of the environment of various regions on Hercynia, pre-TBK. These areas tend to have more prefabricated homes than usual.

Settlement: The HIC chose a prefabricated city in this area for their trading hub and named it **Fengdu.**

OPS-SIDE

Where the Live-Side of Beacon was designed to host an endless variety of flora, fauna, and to provide living spaces for the Idaeans, Ops-Side is all purpose and function.

The stretching dunes of the Endless Sands covers most of this side of the planet. This vast, empty space was treated as a canvas for various utility projects, such as the manufacturing capabilities of the Molten Sprawl, or the electrical storage of the ~~Storm Towers.~~

Some projects are less official, and more a matter of convenience. The ~~Pits~~ only exist because of a need for chemical dumping ballooned out of control. The Junk Heap similarly came about after the chaos of the Pandemonium and the subsequent Exodus.

MOLTEN SPRAWL (HEPHAESTUS)

Rimming the edge of the Alloy Sea are grand tracts of factory districts wide enough to cover the surface of Cradle several times over. The architecture of the factories leans toward a brutalist style composed of concrete and metal, ranging in height from 20 to 400 meters tall. Between the factories are canals full of white hot molten metal runoff from the Alloy Rivers that flows to feed the factories. At least, they would be fed if they were in operation.

Nearly all factories stand quiet and empty without equipment, just concrete shells awaiting a purpose. The few that do operate are grouped together near the Alloy Sea. This small patch of a few dozen factories produces subalterns, solar satellites, and other parts in quantities sufficient to replace those that wear down and break around Beacon.

The process is automated, with signals sent across the planet to the factories to produce and deliver a replacement. Once created, the product is sent down to Hermes for transportation. Occasionally a deficit of goods will kick off a rush to outfit a larger swathe of factories, but the equipment is melted down or thrown onto the Junk Heap once the need has been met.

The interiors of active factories are not designed for easy traversal, even for a mech. Jam-packed into every corner are rolling conveyor belts, rotary crushing machines, vats of molten metal, and hammering pistons, among other machines devoid of safety regulations.

BLACK LICHEN

Omnipresent throughout the Molten Sprawl (and the edges of the Alloy River and Sea) is a thick black lichen that grows in patches on walls, canals, and in the Undersprawl. Its surface is textured with feathery fronds that brush passersby and flake free, causing the air of the Sprawl to be rife with harmless free-floating black fragments, like thick ash particles. The lichen is edible and supports an odd ecosystem of extremophiles consisting primarily of lizards.

UNDERSPRAWL

Beneath the surface of the Molten Sprawl are several sublayers collectively referred to as the Undersprawl. As with most Idaean subterranean areas, the walls contain ~~osteomolt.~~ Long-range comms are impossible and short-range comms are unstable; they'll be affected by interference if used outside of line of sight. Many of the walls, floors, and ceilings are covered in layers of black lichen, with white stone peeking through in places.

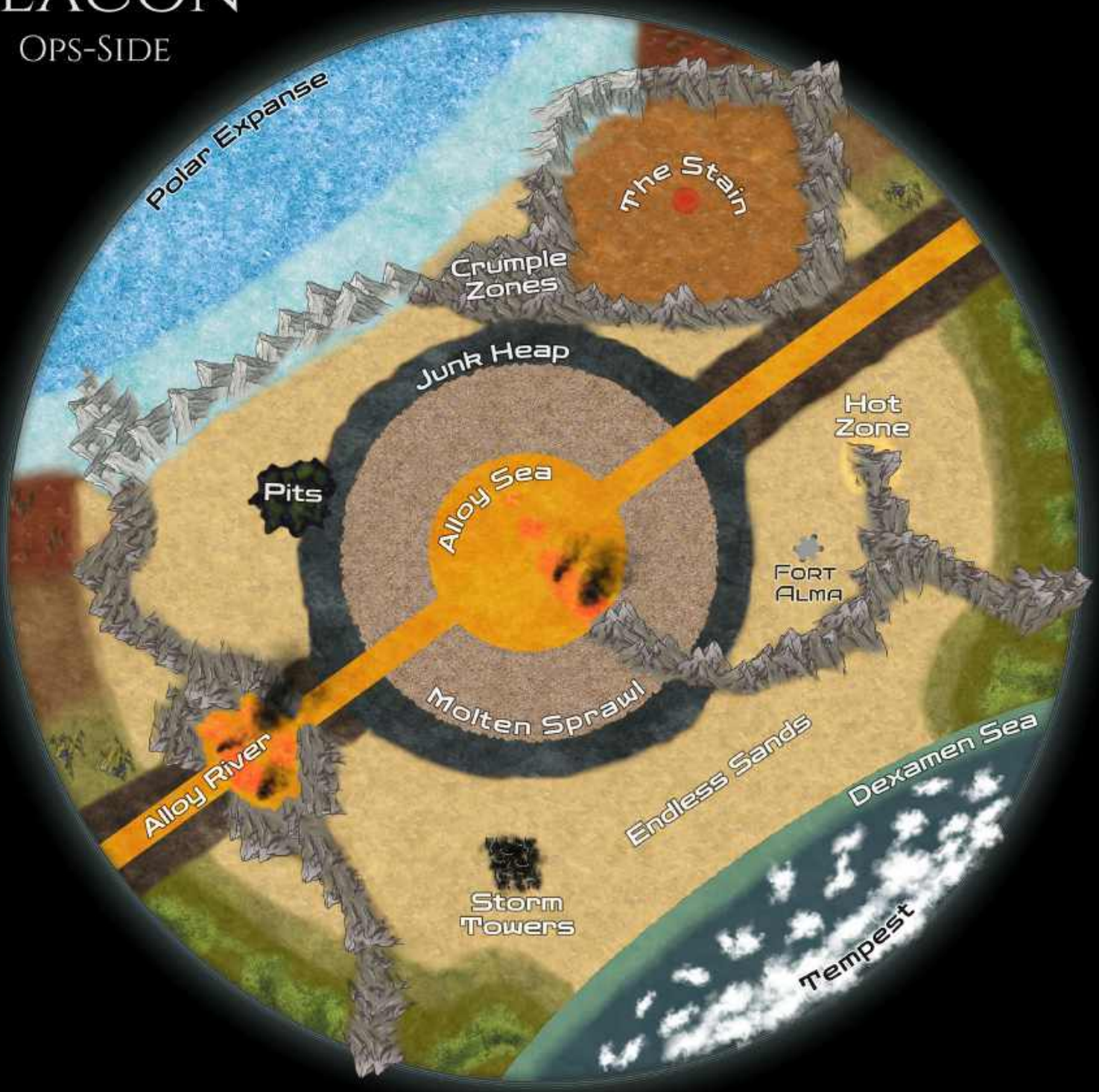
Uppermost Layer: This layer consists of complex, claustrophobic networks of halls with conveyor floors (typically deactivated) used to quickly transfer equipment when initiating a new factory's operation. Vertical conveyor belts use hooks to carry factory products as they descend many kilometers into the depths of Hades. Pipes carry liquid metals and other materials from the deepest sublayer to the factories above.

Middle Layer: This layer includes many utilities, such as power cabling, chemical liquid plumbing, rotary force generators, and so on. It also includes smaller heat-protected factories that perform work on either specialist equipment or delicate, non-industrial household goods, though few of these are currently in operation.

Somewhere within the byzantine maze of the Middle Layer is a room with a connection to **REDACTED**

Beacon

Ops-Side



Deepest Layer: This layer is more open, stretching into the horizon until the blurry heat haze obscures vision. Colossal metal columns hold up the ceiling ten kilometers above. The area acts as material storage, both solid and liquid. Many metals cannot be a part of the Alloy River due to high melting points or low boiling points. As such, tungsten, lead, zinc, and other metals are stored in towering molten vats that can be measured on the scale of seas and oceans. Pipes descend from the ceiling to draw the liquid metals when the factories on the upper levels require them. Other materials are stored in chunk and powder form in sealed vaults on a similar scale.

On the Deepest Layer is a set of casting molds built adjacent to the tungsten vat. The molds hold dozens of massive octagonal rods that are 1 kilometer in diameter and 8 kilometers in length. The mold can break open, dropping the rods onto sloped chutes that end in circular holes that seem to just be backstops for the rods, going nowhere. These tungsten alloy rods are ammunition for ~~Artemis's~~ weapon, the **REDACTED**

MOLTEN SPRAWL SIGHTS

ROLL 1D6

1	A native subaltern kneels next to a wall shrouded in a sheet of thick black lichen. It works away at the lichen with a scraper, peeling off chunks of it at a time. It has revealed a small patch of uncovered wall, which is apparently stark white stone. A small pack of cat-sized lizards follow the subaltern and catch the falling lichen chunks. As you watch, you see the lichen spreading, covering the exposed wall at roughly the same speed as the scraping that reveals it.
2	The sound of creaking draws your attention to a nearby canal. A subaltern stands above the molten liquid on tall metal stilts. Whatever the metal is, it doesn't seem affected by the heat as the subaltern trundles along. When one stilt impacts a fallen chunk of factory rubble overhanging a canal ledge, you watch the subaltern suddenly tip forward into the drink. It painstakingly pulls itself from the canal and sits on a nearby ledge, manipulators pulling chunks of cooling metal off of itself in what is likely to be a long cleaning process.
3	Passing along a canal, you see a mechanical pump piping the molten metal into a nearby factory. People in heavy, heat-resistant gear clamber over the device, fine-tuning the operation. They invite you inside the 'empty' factory, where you see dozens of people - families, really - inhabiting the air conditioned interior. They chemically separate the molten alloy at stations, then cool it into transferable bricks for transport and sale at ~~Tilt.~~
4	Inside an active, buzzing factory, a squat subaltern makes its rounds with an array of tools, performing maintenance on the machinery. When an overstressed gear pops out of place with a sound like a gunshot, it knocks the subaltern over and onto a conveyor belt. Before it can extract itself, the subaltern is dumped into a pot of molten metal. The pot empties into casting molds, creating parts for what appears to be the very same subaltern model.
5	Moving through the factories, you suddenly find yourself atop a high cliff. A hundred meters below, the factories continue into the distance. The upper level's canal has been dammed and connected via pipe to the lower section. Looking around, you see what appears to be one half of a ruined factory standing atop the cliff, while the other half lies far below, as if sheared in two by the ground itself.
6	You arrive at the scene of a disaster. A factory has fallen directly into a major canal and the flow has caused a rising mound of cooling metal to form on the paths and rubble. A group of subalterns gathers around to fruitlessly attempt to restore order. Then the sky goes dark and a beam of light descends from the sky and cuts through the smoky haze. A solar satellite lends a concentrated laser to aid the cleanup process.

JUNK HEAP

The area surrounding the Molten Sprawl is a dumping zone for all of Beacon. Subalterns, satellites, machinery, and any other non-organic waste eventually makes its way here, usually through the underground tunnels or by automated flying carriers doing drop-offs. The result is piles of scrap so deep and so wide that it sometimes overflows into the nearby factory districts or tips into the Alloy River.

The Junk Heap was originally set in place by the Idaeans as a stopgap while they were reconfiguring the Phlegethon in the aftermath of the Pandemonium. Much of the rubble and wreckage excavated after the disaster ended up here. Instead of recycling machinery as usual, zones were created where it could be piled. Though the Phlegethon was eventually successfully rerouted, the zones were not removed before the Idaeans evacuated.

During the Exodus, the Idaeans' household property could not be brought onto the ships with them, and so it was left behind and collected for disposal by subalterns. Buried under mountains of waste are clues about the Idaeans that they left behind in their waste.

This area can be used for the **Dumpster Diving** downtime activity. People gather from all over Beacon for the pleasant pastime of rooting through the garbage of some long lost civilization. Some even set up shops selling souvenirs and knicknacks.

ENDLESS SANDS (ASHLANDS)

This immense desert consists of stretches of rolling dunes and barren landscape. The area vacillates between warm and cold depending on the cycle of the solar satellites, which tend to go through maintenance and self-checks while flying over the Sands.

Few things live here since there is no surface water, and the groundwater is kilometers deep. There is a more thriving ecosystem deep in the warmer underground, including burrowing worms, vermin, and centipede-like creatures, but they seldom approach the surface unless disturbed. The occasional grouping of enormous megaflora dots the surface, with root systems capable of reaching the vast underground water supply. They might even spread across the desert in a few millennia.

The desert was treated as a sandbox for utility projects by the Idaeans, most of the space going unused. The Idaeans called this area the Ashlands because **REDACTED**

Settlement: Union finds and claims Fort Alma, as they name it. The Fort towers above the Sands.

SETTLEMENTS

When the blink gates to Beacon open, humanity comes flooding through like a tide. The population of Beacon swiftly swells from the tens of thousands of Farseers into the millions. By the end of Act 1, billions of souls reside on the planet, with more migrants arriving every day. Traveling from all over the Milky Way, refugees, pilgrims, and entrepreneurs arrive in a tour de force.

Despite the skyrocketing human presence, Beacon's titanic scope makes it feel like a drop in the bucket. Between its swathes of prefabricated housing and the endless free land up for grabs by enterprising colonies, the world never feels overcrowded.

Aside from the Farseers, most of the factions arrive on Beacon in the early waves through the blink gate over the course of a few days. The various factions of Beacon will spend the early sections of Act 1, before the start of the third mission, settling into new surroundings. They begin the process of establishing forward operating bases or laying the foundations for towns and cities.

BOUQUET AND THE ASTER ISLES (AEGEAN)

THE EMPYREAN BASTION OF THE ANNORUM

Dotted across the great blue expanse of the Dexamen Sea are strings of islands in archipelagos that ring the ~~Tempest~~ from a 'safe' distance. While most of the islands are devoid of any structure, some have pre-built habitats and homes. The structures tend toward tempered glass housing that allows light in for in-home gardens that are tended to by native subalterns. These structures, though beautiful and delicate looking, are more than strong enough to withstand the tropical storms from the south that appear whenever they would be thematically appropriate.

A jewel among pearls, Bouquet is named and claimed by the Annorum for its headquarters on Beacon. It is around 400 km^2, crescent shaped, with a 2.8 km high mountain in its northern center. The inner edge of the crescent is a sheltered shoreline of pristine pink-sand beachline, while the outer edge is mostly steep bluffs overlooking crashing waves. The tropical vegetation is thick, but brick roads and paths sprawl out to join together the numerous homes, some of which are built into the ridged folds of the stephills leading up to the mountain.

All in all, a paradise.

The Annorum's operations on Beacon are a joint venture between numerous houses who each want a slice of the pie. The two largest contributors to the effort are the House of Stone, who have contributed a significant fraction of the ships that compose the Armada, and the House of Glass, who have sent their finest house companies, led by Lady Galea Vebelle. The larger Annorum ships capable of landing on planets, such as subline corvettes and destroyers, have opted to land in the waters around Bouquet and nearby islands.

The structures were originally homes for Idaeans working in the ~~Poseidon Laboratory~~. The greenhouses were meant for showcasing the newly cloned species of flora and fauna to Idaean leadership, as well as testing them before introducing them to the wild.

POINTS OF INTEREST

BIODOMES

The Annorum's high command building on Beacon is the largest structure in Bouquet. Inside a ring of storage and housing spaces are enormous tempered glass domes, each containing a different biome. The biomes are reflective of Beacon, including habitats similar to the Tropical Belt, the Temperate Belt, the Arid Belt, and the Polar Expanse. Some of the less aggressive fauna present in those areas can be found here as well, cared for by native subalterns.

The Annorum will typically host briefings and meetings at various small structures within the domes. These are sometimes disrupted by curious animals or simulated weather patterns, like a sudden downpour or a whiteout blizzard.

BLUSH-SAND BAY

All along the inner edge of the crescent island are pink sand beaches that are sheltered from the larger waves of the Dexamen sea. The luxuriant beaches have accouterments furnished by the House of Glass and are fit to compete with even the extravagant resort beaches of Ispahsalar. While the bay is open to both noble and ignoble, there are exclusive noble clubs for the high and mighty to hobnob. Still, some of the rich and powerful slip away from the stuffy company to visit the ignoble beach parties, which have a justified reputation for getting wet and wild.

CLAMSHELL AMPHITHEATER

This open-air amphitheater is of Greco-Roman architecture and features a grand stage. Various traveling troupes hold plays, performance exhibitions, religious events, and concerts here. The AUC also frequently hosts ceremonies, such as military awards for excellence in the line of duty, along with promotion and retirement events. The seating in the stands is peculiar; instead of chairs, there are platforms topped with large rainproof cushions.

ASTER ISLES SIGHTS

ROLL 1D6

1	The pink beachfront is hopping, with a band playing classical music, food being served, and laughing children running across the sand and jumping into the rolling surf. Then the plants along the shoreline shift, crinkled leaves folding and collapsing in on themselves, and curly fronds retracting into stalks. In a moment, the foliage goes from vibrant to barren. A siren blares, and the people swiftly pack up their things and clear the beachfront. Minutes later, a tall wave sweeps up past the sand and over the previously lush shore. It's high tide.
2	A nearby emplaced AA turret hums to life, turning and pointing toward the sky. Looking up, you see a bird, previously circling, now descending in a steep dive toward a populated beachfront. The bird, seemingly tiny, grows in size as it nears, until something gray and blue with a 6-meter wingspan crashes into the waves near the beach. After a moment, it beats its wings and takes off, a large wriggling fish in its serrated beak. The turret, following its every movement, deactivates and returns to sleep mode.
3	As the water recedes in low tide, a strange subaltern is revealed. Enormous and half buried in the sand, it slowly drifts toward the beach, carrying before it a small dune of sand. Once it reaches above the usual water line, it begins smoothing the sand up the beach, all the way to the vegetation. Then its body seems to collapse in on itself, narrowing to the proportions of a pole sticking out of the sand. The pole swiftly cuts through the sand and back into the water.
4	Out to sea, there's a low thrum as one of the floating cruisers ignites its reactor. Its thrust causes the water under it to grow turbulent, then form a whirlpool as the 600 meter-long subline ship lifts into the air. As it passes over the island, water streaming off of the ship's sides drenches the unwary pedestrians beneath it, who curse the pilot. The more prepared passersby open their parasols and continue strolling through the sudden downpour.
5	On a cliff a short way inland, sunlight glints of something and catches your eye. Looking up, you see a jagged piece of torn metal driven into the rock wall. At fifty meters above sea level, it must have taken a massive amount of force to plant it so deeply and firmly in place.
6	A handsome young man sits at a picnic table on a cliff overlooking a beach. He's dressed in a service uniform, minus the coat he's set aside under the warm sun. He looks between his slate and the beach below. He seems to be intently watching a distant, carefree man surfing the waves. *"Your hair is summer's sunrise, August amber, my heart… no, no, this is dreadful."* He lets his head drop onto the table with a thump. Ah, it seems that love has claimed another victim.

UNDER-FERRY (ODYSSEY SHUTTLES)

The Aster Isles are connected through a series of pneumatic tubes that carry shuttles under the seafloor. The shuttles are very similar in design to the shuttles of the ~~Hermes transit system in Hades~~, but they only travel between islands.

Going anywhere in the shuttles is easy, though going to a specific island requires figuring out what the terminal buttons in Idish mean, or solving them through trial and error. Some buttons prompt restricted areas, such as the ~~Poseidon Laboratory;~~ access to these is denied without proper Idaean identification. The Annorum eventually figures out the layout and button mapping, and posts guides for travelers.

FORT ALMA (OLYMPUS)

FORWARD OPERATING BASE OF THE 14TH FLEET

From the dunes of the Endless Sands rises a towering megastructure of concrete and metal. When the ~~Atlas~~ of Idaea was first constructed, there was only the bare metal shell. Olympus was crafted as both the docking point for their ships, and as a temporary housing for the newly named 'Idaeans'. They would spend decades in residence on Olympus as the world of Idaea was built around them, until they eventually packed up and moved down to Hades.

Fast forwarding to today, Fort Alma (named after Royce's deceased daughter) is the primary forward operating base of the Union on Beacon. It was, in many ways, the ideal location. The massive hangars, the remote location, and the lack of potential cover for a hostile ground assault made for a strategically sound choice. The structure's concrete and metal halls were empty and sterile, but included plumbing and power, and were large enough to easily house the fleet and its personnel.

In fact, most of the Union personnel live on the top three levels of the Fort. Printed habitats and open-air markets form patterns on the smooth roof split by wide gaps for ship docking. Below that are the hangar bays, barracks for marines and support personnel, storage, and other utilities. The floors below extend into the titanic pillars that hold up the main body of the Fort and descend far below the sand level, all the way down to connections to ~~Hermes~~ and the ~~Atlas~~. The walls and structures of the upper levels do not contain signal-blocking ~~osteomolt,~~ since it had not yet been invented while Olympus was inhabited by the Idaeans.

POINTS OF INTEREST

COMMAND CENTER

One wing of the Fort is delineated from the rest by its unique architecture. The central atrium is vaulted like a cathedral with towering columns. Instead of artificial lights, the room's light is provided by a crystalline globe powered by a concentrated beam of sunlight piped from the depths, similar to the solar satellites. One great wall of the atrium is taken up by the gold engraving of a mountain rising up through a cloud layer. Atop its peak, grand marble structures form the image of a city of spires. Inscribed in Idish overtop the city are these words: "From the ashes, Olympus rises."

Union has taken this area as the 14th Fleet's command center. Connected to the main atrium are multiple floors of operations centers, conference rooms, and offices. In these private rooms, the fleet's leadership charts out the future of Union on Beacon.

FORT ALMA SIGHTS

ROLL 1D6	
1	From atop the Fort, you see distant plumes of dust slowly moving toward you. A flash of silver crests a dune, followed by others. As they come closer, you make out sand skimmers blazing a trail at breakneck speed across the sands. You can just make out the sounds of hooting and hollering as marines recklessly treat each dune as a ramp for stunts. Some people just aren't happy if they aren't in danger both on and off-duty.
2	Passing down one hall a couple sublevels down, you are surprised to see a group of people gathered in a normally empty hall. Someone has pulled back a moveable panel to reveal a mural covering the wall. The art depicts a burning, charred planet sitting in the palm of a grotesquely malformed hand. It's sickening to look at.
3	Thumping music and flashing lights from the roof of the Fort draws marines in droves to see what the commotion is about. Nikki Halo, celebrated pop star and patriotic icon of Union, has landed with a splash to perform a concert for the troops. Subline ships in the skies above launch fireworks from atop their fuselage. The booze flows like the Endless Sands. For a brief, blissful moment, everyone forgets their troubles. All in all, it's one hell of a show.
4	You find yourself turned around and lost in one of many similar corridors. While you're trying to retrace your steps, you hear shuffling steps coming up a spiral staircase. Looking down, you see a group of four marine scouts. They look thin, pale, but overjoyed to see you. The scouts had gone delving deep into the labyrinth below. Just as the architecture was starting to change, they met a subaltern who told them to turn back. Some of the group continued, and the scouts don't know what happened to them.
5	Warning alarms sound on the roof of the Fort. Marines with neon vests usher off-duty marines and civilians to a safe distance from one section. Above, a quiet hum steadily grows, until you look up and see it. A titanic capital ship descends from the heavens along one of the zero-g channels toward the dock port. The multi-kilometer mountain of floating metal looks absurd in atmosphere, but that doesn't stop this one from touching down in the docks, locked into place by grav-clamps and ready for maintenance.
6	There's a bit of commotion on the 3rd sublevel, and a voice calls up for help shifting boxes. A group of bored marines were mapping the floor when they found a hidden room. Inside are stacks of crates full of old junk, including waterproof tarps, sticky tape, socks, and expired snacks you've never seen before. The strangest crate contains a set of extendable flag poles and tri-color flags striped black, dark blue, and blue. (SecComm era flags.)

DOGTAG ALLEY

Once Union moved in, it took no time at all for certain types of businesses to set up shop in its shadow. The most (in)famous businesses line a crease between two large metal plates on the surface of the Fort. The so-called Dogtag Alley consists of bars, smokehouses, gambling dens, tattoo parlors, and brothels, among other trades built on boardwalks in long rows. Dazzling neon signs and flirtatious holograms lure in large crowds of off-duty marines.

PCH and other Enterprises that run the establishments have an unspoken agreement with Union leadership to keep things under control. In return, Union tolerates their technically unauthorized, unlicensed presence for the sake of troop morale.

CAPITAL HANGARS

These hangars make up the only planet-side hangar bay capable of holding a capital ship in the known galaxy. The hangars generate 'channels' of zero gravity that reach out of the atmosphere, allowing vast capital ships to descend from orbit, pass through large gaps in the ceiling and dock for maintenance. It didn't take much adjustment for the grav-clamps to fit modern Union ships. Zero-grav fields around the ships allow tethered personnel to float along hulls as they work before hoisting themselves back out into real gravity.

THE DEPTHS

The deeper one descends into Fort Alma, the more labyrinthine the endless halls, chambers, and staircases become, with extraspatial technology used to fold geometry and architecture in impossible ways. ~~Feltz~~, bored during his long wait between the Idaeans' Exodus and the arrival of humanity, used the nymphs to extensively remodel the structure's layout again and again, until it mirrored his own twisted mind. Navigating from the surface down to the lowest levels would require a protracted journey with great risk of becoming hopelessly lost, and some groups that attempt it are never heard from again.

FENGDU

INTERGALACTIC TRADING HUB OF THE HIC

Time is money, and Fengdu was founded on this fact. When the blink gate to Beacon opened, the members of the HIC scrambled to set up shop. The greatest singular migration and colonization effort in the history of the human race was underway, and everyone was going to need something. The HIC would, of course, be there to provide for the pioneers and colonists at a semi-reasonable price. Expedience became the name of the game when the HIC decided on its headquarters.

Thus an enormous prefabricated city was chosen. For the HIC, it was a dream too good to be true. It came pre-built, powered, plumbed, and waiting for anyone to move in. As high as each tower soared, there were often equally voluminous spaces beneath the surfaces, perfect for warehouses. The plain, brutalist architecture and lackluster facades wwere spruced up with awnings and a bit of paint, the streets and buildings were given names and numbers, and just like that, Fengdu was open for business.

Now the multilayer streets are subjected to densely packed throngs of customers and freight trucks. The air thrums with the calls of vendors in market stalls, holographic advertisements, and the unending flow of commerce. Goods from across the Milky Way are shipped in and distributed at breakneck speed. The city's population quickly swells into the millions.

Of course, IPS-N, SSC, and Harrison Armory have all stood up licensing facilities to profit off the inevitable conflicts destined to flare up on Beacon. They section off large districts of Fengdu to support their operations.

The city itself is situated in the Temperate Belt, nestled into a wide valley beneath scenic snow-capped mountains to the north and surrounded by tall forests of mixed deciduous and coniferous trees. The southeastern edge of the city sits against a cliff which overlooks a lake where starships will typically dock. Lake Lanier spans a couple hundred kilometers across, with sheer cliffs rising into a towering mountain range on the far side. A trick of the weather often has mist rolling down off the mountains above Fengdu or fog coalescing and rising from the lake below it. As a result, the city is frequently blanketed in white clouds.

POINTS OF INTEREST

AMBASSADOR'S APEX

The tallest spire in central Fengdu was taken over by the HIC to serve as its headquarters and embassy on Beacon. Richly appointed and furnished, the skyscraper projects an aura of wealth and power. In the uppermost levels, the three delegates hold court. There they decide the fate of smaller corporations who stand to either make a fortune in the lucrative markets of Fengdu or fall into obscurity.

AMMO DUMP

Beneath one unassuming building, down a long freight elevator ride, is a firing range colloquially called the Ammo Dump. While the bunker's official use is storing munitions and weaponry, most people know it for its unofficial purpose. The massive room is a kilometer across on its long side and 200 meters high. Harrison Armory personnel will often spend their breaks firing off expiring and extraneous munitions at targets on the far side of the room. Bruce Dawson can sometimes be found here blowing off steam and blowing apart defective machinery at the same time.

ZENITH HEALTH CENTER

This SSC-run healthcare facility provides galaxy-class treatment options for people across Beacon. One among its multitude of services is an all-encompassing gender-confirming treatment suite. For a nominal fee, a patient can complete the process in three days with follow-up check-ins and prescriptions. The result is thorough, discreet, and personalized to the patient's wishes.

CRADLE AND ALL

An old fashioned karaoke bar. The interior is decorated with pictures of celebrities long dead. The only songs available are pre-Fall classics from Old Earth (the GM defines what counts as 'classic', abuse this to your heart's content). The proprietor will show off their collection of ancient mech figurines to their favorite customers.

GRAY MARKETS

While setting up a stall or shop requires a license from the HIC, that gave no pause to certain black market purveyors. All manner of illicit trade is available in back alleys and basements. Even merchants who aren't selling contraband, but who missed out on the initial landrush, have stood up 'gray markets' on the forested fringes of Fengdu.

The watchdogs in the city will occasionally mobilize to remove the messy impromptu stalls and forcibly close up shops. The illegal merchants melt into the woods at the first sign of hostility, then creep back into place once the attention has died down.

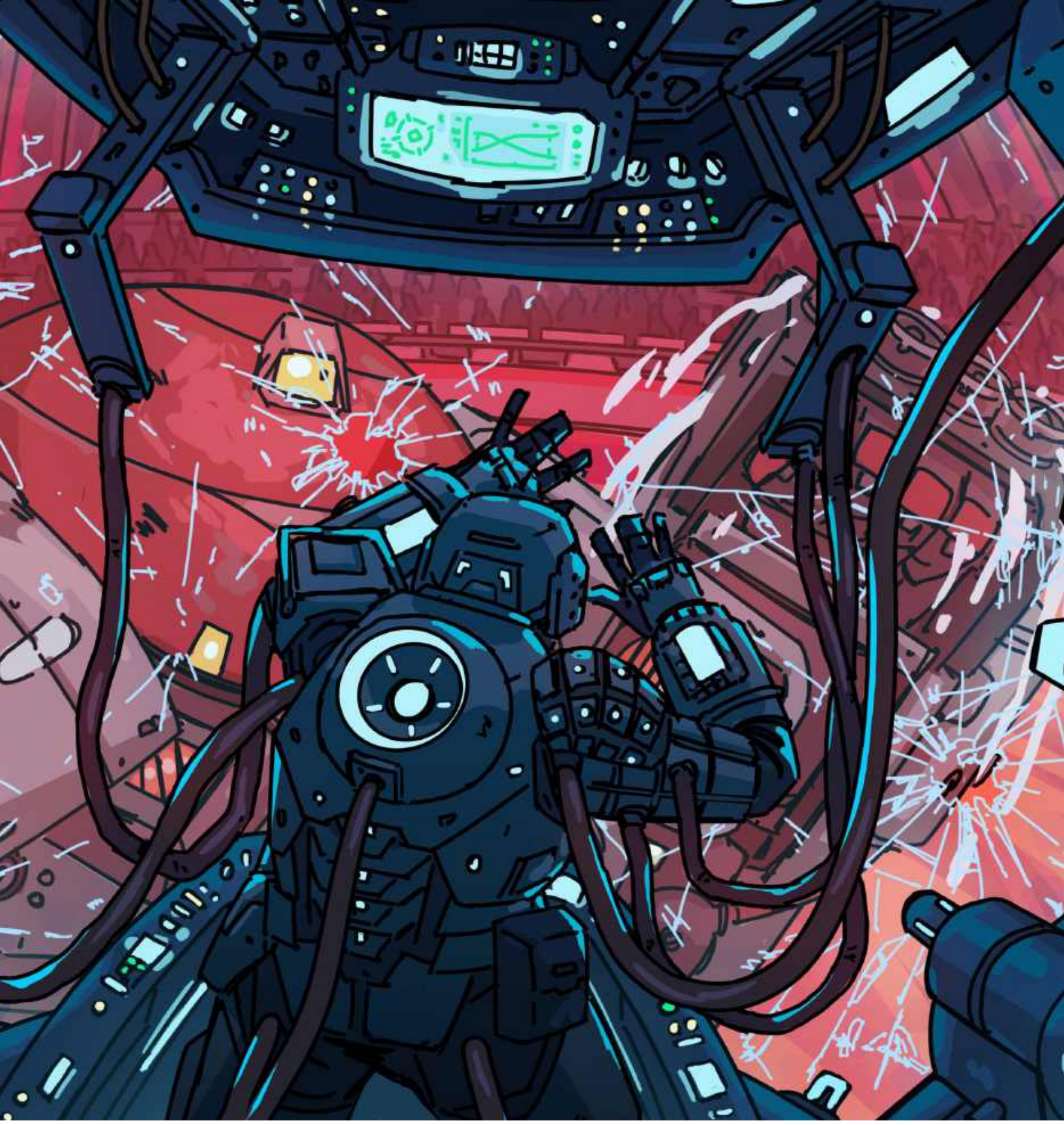
TOWNS

Numerous small towns composed of prefabricated housing dot the outskirts of Fengdu. They sit nestled in the foothills beneath the mountain and around the lake. Not all who work in Fengdu live there; some commute instead. Imported goods for the gray markets flow through these towns, which have far less regulation on their ports than the docks of Fengdu.

FENGDU SIGHTS

ROLL 1D6

1	The Steel Somersault bar is oddly quiet at this time of day. A glance inside reveals why. A dozen Union marines sit across the room from a similar group of Annorate soldiers. The other patrons are nervously avoiding their glares. The air is frosty with tension. There's a jukebox in the corner.
2	A salesman approaches a PC and tries to hard sell them an off-brand foot massage appliance, but very badly. First they ask, then they get irate, then they beg on behalf of their extended and hungry family, becoming increasingly distraught. They seem incapable of taking 'no', or even 'yes' as an answer. If the appliance is bought, they will quickly drop a 'no refunds' clause, then wrap up shop and run. The device actually does incredible foot massages.
3	On the seedier side of town, you pass by a strange sort of clinic. It offers 'temporary genetic enhancements'. The posters on the outside advertise hair and skin alterations, extra limbs, fur, claws, tails, all of which will revert or fall off within a month, 'or your money back!'. The pitch is accompanied by an image of a feminine figure with feline ears atop her head. The sight sparks inexplicable anxiety within you.
4	A blazing forge warms the nearby street. Monk-like figures in robes with shaved heads gracefully move between various metalworking stations. They fold molten steel over and over on itself, eventually forming blades. Any purchase made will be accompanied with a monk's stern warning to use the dangerous weapon wisely, followed by a deep bow. The sharp blade will shatter on its first strike.
5	A fortune teller has set up a tiny, cramped stall. 'Madame Noveau' offers readings from tarot cards, palms, tea leaves, fried circuitry. If paid extra, she does readings from osteomolt-laced rubble that only gives portents of disaster and destruction. Her prize possession is a bit of 'cursed crystal' recovered from the Stain that occasionally gives true premonitions of the future. Touching it causes one to receive ~~**Pandora's Mark.**~~
6	By accident or design, you have wandered into Fengdu's red-light district. Sex workers strut their stuff, calling out to you. Explicit stores line the street. One business catches your eye. The "*All Talk*" brothel advertises 'all-verbal, non-physical services'. The menu lists 'sympathetic support, political debates, winning arguments, losing arguments, and verbal abuse courses'.



SECTION 2

PROLOGUE

PROLOGUE MISSIONS

The campaign's Prologue decides the first steps the PCs will take on their chosen Path. The Path's Prologue mission determines the events leading up to the PCs' arrival on Beacon, while give them a sense of the bigger picture.

Have the players review the *Pass the Torch: Player's Guide* to determine what Path they prefer. The GM should also talk to their players and work with them to determine their PCs' backgrounds, which should tie in with their Path faction.

Annorum Path

The PCs take on **Mission: Cloak and Dagger.**

UNION PATH

The PCs take on **Mission: Plagueship.**

BACKGROUND QUESTIONS

To help the players establish backgrounds for their PCs, the GM can ask the players a series of questions. These include Path-specific questions, allowing the players to flesh out events that occurred shortly before the Prologue missions.

- Where were you born and raised?
- What do you do in your spare time?
- How did you get involved with the **Annorum**/***Union***?
- How has the Argent Plague impacted you, if at all?
- Do you worship Lumen, the Passions, or practice any other religion?
- Do you know the other pilots? If so, how did you meet?
- What do you hope to find on Beacon?

Annorum Path

- What were you doing on the desert world of Tilimsan?
- How were all of you approached for the mission?

UNION PATH

- What got you aboard a Union capital ship en route to Beacon?
- How was the trip going before everything went to hell?

ALTERNATIVE PROLOGUE

If none of the Prologue missions fit what the GM and players are looking for as an introduction to the campaign, the GM can instead create a custom mission for their purposes.

The GM can even have a previous campaign lead into *Pass the Torch,* though adjusting for the timeline may require consideration.

Should the GM intend to do this, it is highly recommended to keep the following points in mind:

- Determine which Path the Prologue mission leads into, and how it can connect to a faction. The PCs should have a reason to travel to Beacon, whether it's through the mission or from their own motivations.
- The Argent Plague should be a major factor in the mission, preferably as a threat to the PCs. It's important to display its capabilities and paint the Plague as a real and present danger. If it is not present, the PCs won't see it in action on Beacon until Act 3.
- For similar reasons, Dusklight should also be utilized to negate the threat of the Argent Plague.

MISSION 0-A: CLOAK AND DAGGER

NORA: "I've prepared your course materials. We should have time on the ship to review them."
SOLENI: "Seriously, you brought those dusty old books along?"
NORA: "Your absence at court is not an excuse to fall behind in your studies. An expedition to the frontier is the perfect opportunity to broaden your horizons."
SOLENI: "Wow. I don't know how you did it, but you've made running away from home and defying my father into a lame field trip."

MISSION BEATS

BEAT: NONE THE WYZER

COMBAT: SCAR TISSUE

BEAT: WARM WELCOME

COMBAT: PANTS ON FIRE

CLOCKS

CITY CROSSING

FOLLOWED

SUMMARY

The PCs undertake a mission to escort the disguised Princess Soleni and Vigilant Nora from the city of Wyzeer to a Salina Wayport, a remote spaceport, for transport off the planet Tilimsan. Mercenaries hired by the House of Thorns attempt to abduct Soleni along the way out of the city.

On the way to the spaceport, the PCs pass through Scar Valley, where they will encounter a nest of enraged dune drakes and the Argent Plague. If they can hold out against the drakes and the nanite swarm, a squad of Plague Doctors from the Church of the Flickering Flame will arrive to cleanse the Plague.

From there, the PCs can press on to Salina Wayport, where an ambush led by Jutta, an agent of the House of Thorns, awaits the group. The PCs must commandeer the *Dahlia,* a corvette, to get off world and bring Soleni to meet her brother, Prince Altair, en route to Beacon.

CHARACTERS

- Soleni Empyrea
- Nora Stonegate
- Altair Empyrea
- Samuel Ludov
- Galea Vebelle
- **Jutta** *(he/him - amiable, smooth, traitorous):* A family friend known and trusted by Soleni who works as a servant for Lord Harrakh. He's secretly an agent of the House of Thorns intent on abducting Princess Soleni.

RECOMMENDED READING

- Annorum Empyrea
- Argent Plague (Prometheus Flame)
- Dusklight
- Lumenism
- Church of the Flickering Flame

PC UNINVOLVEMENT

If the PCs do not undertake this mission, most likely due to being on a different Path, the princess faces several abduction attempts. A team of loyal kuirassers successfully brings her offworld, several dying in the process. The experience is traumatizing for Soleni, who regrets the plan, but can't turn back without rendering their deaths meaningless.

THE SITUATION

The PCs, Soleni, and Nora are walking into a trap. Agents of the House of Thorns know of Soleni's plan and intend to take advantage of it. The following is the situation on the ground when the PCs arrive on the scene.

TILIMSAN

The desert world of Tilimsan is a core world of the Annorate Concern. It is the home of the House of Sand, an old and storied noble house. Most of humanity lives on the cooler northern and southern poles of the planet, where liquid water forms oceans. Toward the equator, the endless dunes become too hot for human life, though that hasn't stopped many ambitious Tilimsani from trying.

Due to the Argent Plague's activity, the surface of Tilimsan is scarred by great valleys and rifts where parts of the planet's crust have been consumed. The nearby star's dimming has had the somewhat beneficial effect of reducing the heat of the world, allowing for easier inhabitation of areas further from the poles. However, the once tropical climates at the poles have become more temperate, with floating ice forming in oceans that had never frozen previously. The south pole, where this mission occurs, is currently experiencing its cold season.

WYZEER

The city of Wyzeer sits on the shore of the Caglia Sea. It might be called a jewel by the nostalgic sort with rose-tinted glasses. Certainly it has its historic charm, with its crumbling architecture tracing back for millenia to the days of the newly minted Baronies. However, most visitors will see it as little more than a dusty set of ancient ruins.

Still, plenty call the archaic city home. The people of Wyzeer, or the Wyzefolk as they call themselves, dress themselves and their homes in colorful sheets of fabric that billow in the strong winds that consistently roll through busy streets. Their primary trade is fishing and soft, silky textiles made from locally-grown fibrous reeds and dyed in vibrant hues.

SOLENI'S PLAN

Princess Soleni of the Annorum Empyrea is defying her father, the Anno, and running away from home. She intends to join her brother, Prince Altair, on his journey to Beacon. Having sat in anguish through Anno Tyrus's tirade at her brother in court shortly after the assassination of her mother, she decided that she could not leave Altair alone in exile.

When Soleni's plan was discovered by Nora Stonegate, her protective Vigilant, she feared that Nora would stop her. However, Nora decided that Soleni would be safer on Beacon, and so she decided to play along. Since then, Nora has taken over the planning process and made arrangements.

The plan begins with Soleni visiting Lord Harrakh's estate in Wyzeer, ostensibly to spend time with Jazine, Harrakh's daughter and Soleni's longtime friend. Jazine, sympathetic to Soleni's goal, has urged her father to aid the plan, and he has gracefully acquiesced.

The plan can be broken down into the following points:

- Hire or commandeer the PCs as guards for the journey. The exact process of this will depend on the background of the PCs.
- The PCs will meet Soleni and Nora at the Copper Coast Cantina, a pub not far from Harrakh's estate. Soleni will be veiled, and the PCs will not be immediately aware they are escorting a princess.
- Nora will refer to Soleni as 'Iris' until her cover is blown.
- The PCs will escort Soleni and Nora to the edge of Wyzeer, retrieve the PCs' mechs, then travel together to Salina Wayport, a remote spaceport.
- At the spaceport, Harrakh's servant Jutta will provide the group with a starship and additional protection. The group will travel to meet the naval group which carries Altair, then continue onward to Beacon.

SOLENI REVEALED

It's inevitable that Soleni's true identity will be revealed at some point during the mission. Should her face be seen, any Annorate citizen will recognize the 5th Princess. If the PCs learn the truth and Nora notices, she will say the following:

Nora: *"The cover was just for buying us time. We can't keep a secret like this under wraps for long. Princess Soleni goes to join her brother, Prince Altair, on his way to Beacon. He doesn't know, nor does Anno Tyrus.*

"This changes nothing, all that matters is her safety and getting her there. It's too late to stop now, and she isn't safe here or anywhere in Annorate space. Maybe… just maybe, Beacon will be safer."

Objectives:	Get the VIP (Soleni) and her bodyguard (Nora) to Salina Wayport and take a ship off-world to Beacon.
Parameters:	Given that the mission involves escorting two individuals, two mechs with the **Expanded Compartments** system may be a beneficial, but it's not strictly required.
Stakes:	Princess Soleni may come to harm, or in the worst case, be abducted by the House of Thorns.
Reward:	Depending on the PCs' performance, they may be awarded **Reserves.** They will also advance to LL 1.

ABDUCTION PLOT

The House of Thorns has other plans for Soleni. Harrakh is a member of the Thorns, and has even gone so far as to encourage his daughter, Jazine, to befriend Soleni in order to create opportunities like this. Now the Thorns intend to abduct Soleni and bring her to Beacon, a world whose vast size facilitates hiding a kidnapped princess. They intend to use her runaway plan as cover for their own plot.

To that end, Harrakh has hired the Dust Devils, an unsavory free company that doesn't know the Thorns' plans but will follow orders for the grand sums they've been paid. Their goal is to separate Soleni from her Vigilant and bring her through the same spaceport and ship that was purportedly intended for Soleni's ride to join Altair.

An airtight plan with one fatal flaw. Nora doesn't trust anyone completely, especially Annorate lords. She acquires the assistance of the PCs without informing Harrakh, putting the PCs in the position to tip the scales.

INTERROGATING PRISONERS

At any point during the mission, the PCs may capture and interrogate the Dust Devils or Jutta. Successful **checks** might reveal information. What they learn will depend on the target.

DUST DEVILS

The mercenaries will misdirect the PCs by saying they're Ungratefuls rebelling against the Annorum. Successful **checks** to learn the truth will reveal they were hired by Jutta, servant of Lord Harrakh, to abduct Princess Soleni. They do not know of the House of Thorns, only that Jutta pays their bills.

JUTTA

If Jutta is captured and questioned, he will also attempt to mislead the PCs to believe he is an Ungrateful. Successful **difficult checks** to extract the truth from him reveals the Lord Harrakh's plot. He knows the name 'House of Thorns', and that Harrakh is a member, but nothing else about the Thorns' plans.

BEAT 0-A1:
NONE THE WYZER

From on high, the planet of Tilimsan is a great, sandy marble with spotty blue patches at both poles. It floats in tight orbit around a dimming star, the Argent Plague busy at work devouring it. Descending toward the southern pole, we see grand oceans dotted with archipelagos. On the northern edge of the Caglia Sea, fishing vessels weigh anchor and depart from the city of Wyzeer, weaving between icebergs floating on the teal waters. The sky is dark, as it almost always is this time of year.

The ice is an unwelcome addition to what was once a warm tropical shoreline. The old, retired Wyzefolk line up at the docks, draped in thick shawls that stand out in bright, vibrant colors. They engage in a common city pastime: staring at the frigid sea and grumbling about how warm it used to be.

A chill wind blows through the streets between crumbling ancient buildings more fit for an archeological dig site than for living. Streetlights illuminate more vividly dyed cloth sheets stretched over streets, alleys, and awnings. There, they catch the wind and billow, rolling with each gust, filling the air with the creak of rope and the sharp snaps of flapping fabric.

Down one alley sits a seedy pub: the Copper Coast Cantina, as the faded sign outside reads. Busy despite the early hour, the loud clientele nearly drown out the dulcet tones of the zither player in the corner.

A cold breeze announces the two figures that arrive through the door; a tall woman and a teenage girl, both hooded and veiled in the same bright, gaudy cloth worn by the Wyzefolk. Peering around in apparent fascination, the girl seems eager to venture forth in every direction at once, and would if it weren't for the anchoring presence of her guardian. The tall woman scans the room for threats and finds only you. She approaches, towing her ward behind her.

Nora and Soleni arrive at the pub and meet with the PCs. After checking to ensure that they are the people she's looking for, Nora will get a corner table in the quieter section of the pub to discuss plans.

BRIEFING

Nora is on edge, to say the least. She will keep her voice low so as not to be overheard as she and Soleni speak with the PCs, covering the following points:

- Nora will state that the safety of 'Iris' is paramount, and that the PCs are to see the mission through even if she herself doesn't make it.
- If the PCs attempt to guess the identity of Soleni, they might recall that the local lord, Harrakh, has a daughter, Jazine, at around the girl's age.
- During the conversation, a waitress will approach and ask the table what they want to order. Aromas waft out of the kitchen and the food is spicy, savory, and largely consisting of seafood. The waitress will mention a locally-distilled hot rum drink to help warm up those headed back out into the cold.
  - ◊ **Soleni:** *"Can I have-"*
  - ◊ **Nora:** *"She'll have water."*
- Soleni will be interested in the PCs, asking them about themselves, to Nora's mild irritation.
- The PCs are to escort the two of them to the edge of Wyzeer, retrieve their mechs, then travel together to Salina Wayport outside the city. There, a ship has been arranged to ferry the group to Beacon.
- Nora will mention that she thinks she saw shadows following them. It might have just been street thugs looking to mug them, but she doubts it.

Once the informal briefing is complete and any food and drink are consumed, Nora will want to get moving.

CITY CROSSING

Military mechs are not allowed within Wyzeer city limits; even without the security considerations, their size would make moving down any of the narrow, winding streets impossible. Instead, the PCs have previously docked their mechs at a drydock on the city's desert-facing north side. Reaching it is the first step.

Agents of the Dust Devils are shadowing the group the entire way. What was supposed to be an easy job of snatching the princess has been complicated by the PCs' presence. Still, they will attempt to abduct the princess when her guardians are distracted.

CLOCKS

Start two racing clocks: a six-segment goal clock called 'City Crossing' and a six-segment threat clock called 'Followed'.

Tick a segment on **City Crossing** whenever an obstacle is overcome that brings the PCs closer to the drydocks. Tick a segment on **Followed** whenever the PCs are stalled, disrupted, or distracted. These events should typically occur as a result of success, failure, or success with consequences on a **check** (or a series of **checks**).

Observant PCs may notice the Dust Devils trailing them, especially as the **Followed** clock fills. The mercenaries are disguised to appear as common Wyzefolk, and will dissemble their intentions if questioned. If cornered, they will draw attention from the other Wyzefolk, who will intervene when they see 'locals' being bullied by foreigners. Handling this poorly might also tick the **Followed** clock, while handling it well might untick it.

Use the **Wyzeer Obstacles** table to put obstacles between the PCs and the drydocks that must be overcome with **checks.** Nora and Soleni will attempt to aid the PCs (granting **+1 Accuracy**) when it falls within their skillset. Nora is proficient with weapons and martial arts, highly perceptive, and can be intimidating. Soleni is proficient with technology and familiar with both Wyzeer and the customs of the Wyzefolk since she has visited Jazine previously.

If the **City Crossing** clock is completed, the PCs reach the dry docks safely. If the **Followed** clock is completed, Soleni is kidnapped by the Dust Devils. See the following **Soleni Kidnapped** section.

DRYDOCKS

Once the PCs reach the busy drydocks, they can retrieve their mechs. Soleni is excited to see the military frames and asks for their mechs' names. During this, the PCs are vaguely aware that they are being watched, though the Dust Devils won't make any moves at this point.

If the PCs bring two mechs with the **Expanded Compartment** systems to accommodate passengers, Nora and Soleni will ride in them. If not, Nora will rent a two-rider ATV from a dealer at the drydocks.

Once preparations are complete, the group is released into the large sandy freight channels that ring the northern edge of Wyzeer and lead out to the great northern desert. From there, it's a near straight shot to Salina Wayport.

WYZEER OBSTACLES

ROLL 1D20	
1-2	The group reaches a river and discovers that the bascule bridge that crosses it is raised and the system that controls it is out of order. The nearest working bridge is a long walk out of the way. Can the bridge be fixed, or the river crossed another way?
3-4	What was expected to be a wide open avenue, as depicted on a map, is instead a crowded market filled to the brim with merchants, stalls, and the buzz of commerce. Anyone could be a threat and there's no room for personal space.
5-6	A beggar approaches Soleni to ask for alms. When she hands them an extravagant sum, the beggar falls to their knees and loudly proclaims their gratitude. This draws attention and more beggars, or abductors in disguise.
7-8	Having taken a wrong turn, the group finds themselves wandering lost in the maze-like alleyways and backstreets of Wyzeer. A route must be found, and any delay will allow pursuers to maneuver into advantageous positions.
9-10	A truck slams into another vehicle and both go careening into a building right in front of the group. Something ignites, and there are calls for help. Soleni doesn't want to leave the drivers or any others injured in the crash to their fate. Those that caused the crash are watching for any opportunity.
11-12	Tall reeds grow in the fields ringing the outer sections of the city. This is Wyzeer's source of fiber for its specialty fabrics. Crossing through them may save time, though the blue and red leaves will camouflage those with ill intent.
13-14	A taxi driver sees the group rushing and offers to get them where they want to go faster. If they get in, they'll be driven off course into a large warehouse ('a shortcut'). The driver leaps from the moving vehicle and the shutters close behind, locking the group in the dark warehouse.
15-16	An electrical transformer has been damaged (sabotaged) and multiple city blocks are experiencing a power outage. With the sky and the streets dark, the poor visibility creates vulnerabilities. Can the transformer be fixed, or can another source of light be procured?
17-18	Having stumbled into a dangerous neighborhood, the group is accosted by thugs demanding payment for free passage. Whether or not the thugs were bribed to accost the group, the situation might create openings for the kidnappers.
19-20	While moving past a construction zone, a remotely controlled industrial subaltern (**Size 1**) goes haywire and attacks the group. It carefully avoids hurting Soleni, but doesn't hold back against the others.

SOLENI KIDNAPPED

If the **Followed** clock fills**,** the Dust Devils kidnap Princess Soleni. There's nothing the PCs can narratively do about it immediately. Depending on the circumstances, Soleni may be dragged kicking and screaming onto a dirtbike and driven away, or the PCs and Nora might turn around and find she's simply vanished.

Nora will be momentarily horrified for failing in her sworn duty, then she'll shake it off and harden her resolve. She'll tell the PCs that 'Iris' has been implanted with a tracking chip. Bringing up her slate, Nora will determine that they're headed north, out of the city… directly toward Salina Wayport, where the group intended to depart from.

> **Nora:** *There's cold fury in the Vigilant's voice. "We have been betrayed."*

With the tracker pointing the way, Nora wants the PCs to pursue Soleni and her abductors.

DESERT CROSSING

Once the PCs are out of the city, Nora's route to Salina Wayport passes through Scar Valley. Any other path will have the PCs trekking long distances through sand dunes with no cover; this would leave the PCs exposed and open to an ambush by their pursuers. If Soleni has already been kidnapped, taking the long route will lead to the PCs falling behind and the princess being flown offworld and out of their reach.

The PCs can attempt to cross Scar Valley or the dunes.

SCAR VALLEY

The walls of the valley are swirled and pitted in wavy lines; a familiar pattern for any surface touched by the Plague. If the PCs ask about Scar Valley, Soleni (if present) will mention that in the Vanishing Era, the land there had been tainted by the Argent Plague, which tore rifts into the sandstone. There are dozens of 'Scar Valleys' and other similar geographical features on Tilimsan carved by the Plague, and such valleys are common sights across the galaxy.

As they pass through the valley, metal structures called seismic vibrators (Soleni calls them thumpers) sense the group's arrival and begin to pound the ground with heavy rods. The thumpers are designed to send vibrations into the ground and drive away the dune drakes, which live in the valley. The drakes are massive, centipede-like crawlers that are rarely seen on the surface, and are sensitive to the vibrations. Without the thumpers, the territorial drakes might be a danger to travelers.

However, on this occasion, the ground begins to rumble and shift. Normally the drakes would flee to the depths, but a third party has forced the drakes toward the surface and made burrowing deeper impossible. That third party is the Argent Plague.

A few Plague nanites fell from space and began chewing microscopic holes into the sand before they were picked up by a hunting dune drake. The nanites slowly reproduced from trace metals in the drake's body over the course of a week until the beast sickened and died in the nest. It infected the other drakes and spread out in veins until it found an underground metal deposit. From there, the infection's spread accelerated.

The result is that the PCs have traveled over ground that is hollow in spots. When the thumpers activate, the valley's floor collapses, revealing writhing pits of the Plague that begin spreading onto the surface. The sickened, furious drakes take out their rage on the intruders while the Plague continues to relentlessly consume and spread.

As conflict begins, the PCs receive text comms from a group of Plague Doctors, a branch of templars from the Church of the Flickering Flame dedicated to hunting down and cleansing Argent Plague infections. Orbital scans have picked up the blink activity from the nanites and the Plague Doctors have deployed a response team.

> *>//AUTOMATED_ADVISORY: CLASS 3 PLAGUE INFECTION DETECTED+++SURFACE SPREAD: MINIMAL+++SUBTERRANEAN SPREAD: ORIGIN BETWEEN 50/100 METERS DEEP+++PLAGUE_DOC RESPONSE: FLASHSPEAR UNIT DEPLOYED+++COMMENT: HOLD FAST AND PRAY+++WE ARE ON OUR WAY*

The Flashspear unit will arrive via ship shortly, but the PCs and their charges must hold out until then. Proceed to **Combat: Scar Tissue.**

DUNES

If the PCs instead decide to avoid Scar Valley to take the long way around despite Nora's advice, the mechs' sensors pick up distant traces of unidentified mechs maneuvering into position ahead of the PCs, clearly intending to block them off. The PCs still have an opportunity to turn back and go through Scar Valley, where they might be able to outrun the larger force.

Should they choose to press ahead into the ambush, the GM could handle it with narrative combat against the Dust Devils with racing clocks.

- **Victory:** If the goal clock fills, the PCs break free of the ambush and put the Devils behind them.
- **Defeat:** If the threat clock fills, the PCs each take **2 structure damage** and **1 stress damage** and the princess is abducted and taken to Salina Wayport.
    - ◊ If the princess was already abducted, the Devils were instead aiming to stall the PCs, who do not arrive to Salina Wayport in time to intercept Soleni's abductors. The result is mission failure.

Alternatively, the GM could run combat on a blank map that represents the featureless dunes. Use the **Holdout** sitrep, with the same victory/defeat results as the above racing clocks. For Enemy Forces, use NPCs from **Combat: Pants on Fire** for reference.

> *Dust clouds rise in the distance and approach from multiple angles. Their combat mechs shed no light in the dark, but your HUD registers their approaching presence. Their transponders are silent, their identification concealed. It's a violation of Annorate law, though you doubt they care. Nora is cold, grim readiness, though her ward is silent. It dawns on the girl that people are about to fight and die over her.*

Once combat is resolved, proceed to **Beat: Warm Welcome.**

COMBAT 0-A1:
SCAR TISSUE

Sitrep: Holdout

Enemy Forces

For 3 PCs: 1x T1 **'Dune Drake Binder' - Specialist Predator** (**Specialist:** Protector; **Predator: Size 1,** Burrower*, Constrict, Grasping Claws*, Hurl Away)
3x T1 **'Dune Drake Hunter' - Predator** (**Size 1,** Burrower*, Skewer Prey, Tail Sweep)

For 4 PCs: +1x T1 **'Dune Drake Binder' - Specialist Predator** (**Specialist:** Protector; **Predator: Size 1,** Burrower*, Constrict, Grasping Claws*, Hurl Away)

For 5 PCs: +2x T1 **'Dune Drake Hunter' - Predator** (**Size 1,** Burrower*, Skewer Prey, Tail Sweep)

Reinforcements

For 3 PCs: 1x T1 **'Dune Drake Queen' - Commander Predator** (**Commander:** Press the Attack; **Predator: Size 2,** Burrower*, Rampage, Skewer Prey, Tail Sweep)
1x T1 **'Dune Drake Binder' - Specialist Predator** (**Specialist:** Protector; **Predator: Size 1,** Burrower*, Constrict, Grasping Claws*, Hurl Away)
2x T1 **'Dune Drake Hunter' - Predator** (**Size 1,** Burrower*, Skewer Prey, Tail Sweep)

For 4 PCs: +1x T1 **'Dune Drake Binder' - Specialist Predator** (**Specialist:** Protector; **Predator: Size 1,** Burrower*, Constrict, Grasping Claws*, Hurl Away)

For 5 PCs: +1x T1 **'Dune Drake Hunter' - Predator** (**Size 1,** Burrower*, Skewer Prey, Tail Sweep)
Drake Queen: Add the **Elite** template and the **Tempered Hide (Resistance** to **kinetic damage)** trait from Monstrosity's Optional Mutations.

* From the **Monstrosity** NPC.

THE STAKES

Hemmed in on all sides by raging megafauna and the spreading Argent Plague, the PCs and their escorts are in a tough spot. If they can't hold out until the Plague Doctors' Flashspear unit arrives, they'll be overrun. If this occurs, the damage to their mechs will be extensive. Worse still, harm will befall those under their watch.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

See the rules for Holdout (*Lancer Core Rulebook* pg 272). If the drakes are reduced to a number that cannot meaningfully threaten the PCs, especially if the queen is dead, the GM may decide to have them run, ending the combat early and victoriously for the PCs.

If the PCs did not bring **Expanded Compartments,** then Soleni and Nora are exposed on their ATV and are more difficult to protect. When tallying the score, the PCs start with **3 points** instead of **4.**

DETAILS

This combat may be difficult for LL0 PCs as a straight up fight, but the PCs have two important advantages: the Argent Plague and the thumpers.

ARGENT PLAGUE

Several spaces on the map are marked as pits, which are holes in the ground that are **1 space deep.** Within these pits are Plague zones. These areas are **dangerous terrain** (dealing **burn damage**). The Plague zones spread from the pits into the surrounding area. At the end of the first round, the Plague spreads in a **Burst 1** around the pit, and the **Burst** increases by **1** at the end of each odd round (to **Burst 2** on round 3, **Burst 3** on round 5). Any object in a Plague zone takes **10 AP kinetic damage** at the end of each round (before the zone spreads).

The Plague will not spread through areas completely enclosed by barrier sphere shields created as **Burst** or **Blast** areas, such as the Aegis's **Defense Net** or the Napoleon's **Blink Shield.** However, the Plague zones will spread through **Line** barriers and other obstructions so long as it is physically possible to reach the area.

Additionally, if the barrier appears and covers spaces that are Plague zones, the spread is unaffected by that shield.

THUMPERS

The seismic vibrators in the valley hold a special place of fear for the dune drakes, and may temporarily drive them away. The four thumpers are objects (**Size** 1, **HP** 10, **Evasion** 5, **E-Defense** 8, **Tags:** *Drone*). If a thumper is hit with a **tech attack,** the attacker can have it move up to **4 spaces** (ignoring engagement) and thump the ground in a **Burst 2.** Dune drakes in the area immediately move their **Speed** directly away from the thumper. This movement is involuntary, but provokes reactions as normal. Each thumper can only be successfully hacked 1/round, and suffers no other effects from the hack.

The drakes fear the thumpers and will not willingly damage them. Clever PCs may use the thumpers to send drakes running into the Plague zones and pits, though they will have to be careful to keep the thumpers out of Plague zones, which will quickly destroy them. The thumpers have no effect on humans or mechs.

DEPLOYMENT

Spread the enemy forces out around the **EDZ/IZ** so that they approach from both sides. Bring the Dune Drake Queen in as reinforcements on the third round.

The PCs deploy in the **ADZ/CZ.**

Scatter the four thumpers along the valley in a loose line from north to south without placing any within 8 spaces of the edges of the map. Additionally, place the thumpers at least 2 spaces away from any Plague pit to avoid them being consumed before PCs can move them.

TACTICS

The dune drakes are cunning and vicious hunters, and are enraged by threats to their home. They are not dumb beasts, nor are they particularly intelligent and strategic. The queen will display the most intelligence, and the others may display more coordination while she is alive on the field.

GM NOTE

If this is the GM's and/or your players' first time playing Lancer, you may wish to tone down and simplify this combat. If so, remove the Commander, Specialist, and Elite templates and the corresponding traits. This will result in an easier and simpler combat, akin to a tutorial, to familiarize yourselves with Lancer's mechanics.

DUNE DRAKE BINDER

The binders will use **Burrower** to charge into the **CZ.** There, they will use **Constrict** to grapple their target (or **Grapple** if they miss). Once grappled, they can use **Hurl Away** to either throw their target out of the **CZ** or into other enemies. If the GM is feeling particularly vicious, they can also throw the PCs into the Plague zones and pits.

DUNE DRAKE HUNTER

The hunters will approach more carefully and use **Skewer Prey** from a distance, especially on **Prone** targets that are thrown out of the **CZ**, attempting to inflict **Slowed.** A **Slowed, Prone** enemy cannot easily re-enter the **CZ.**

DUNE DRAKE QUEEN

The queen will at first act like a hunter, attacking from afar and using **Press the Attack** when possible. Use her **Voice of Authority** to provide support to the other drakes, especially for saves against the thumpers. Near end of the combat, or if she is engaged in melee, she will use **Rampage** to charge into the **CZ.**

OUTCOME

PC VICTORY

When the PCs achieve victory, the Flashspear unit arrives to cleanse the Plague:

The shrieking Dune Drakes are scattered, the Plague-ridden survivors beginning to burrow and retreat. The Plague churns the sands around you, a flowing river of silver just beneath the surface. It even grows upon your mech chassis, forming filaments that billow like metal flame.

Then metal spires impact the ground, blasting up sand and drakeblood, skewering the fleeing beasts. Yellow and orange dusklight pours from lamps set atop the spears. Its cleansing radiance shines through sand and chassis, bathing you in its warm glow within your cockpit.

PC DEFEAT

If the PCs could not hold back the dune drakes, then they are overwhelmed and Soleni pays the price:

The dune drakes press in on all sides, their fury and fear pushing them into a frenzy. Cornered between your group and silvery death, they decide you are the easier foe.

Mixed into the noise of rending metal is another sound, a bloodcurdling scream. The cry of a child in agony. Horrified, Nora shouts something in response, but it's lost in the chaos of battle.

The Flashspear unit arrives moments too late. While they dispatch the remaining dune drakes and cleanse the area, the damage has been done. The PCs each take **1 structure damage** and Soleni has been badly

wounded, if present. If Soleni was inside a mech's **Expanded Compartments,** you can flavor the structure damage as a dune drake tearing off a section of the mech's hull before maiming her.

At the GM's discretion, Soleni can lose an arm or leg to the dune drakes. While the drake is dragging her away, she is pulled through a patch of the Plague and is 'Plague-burned' where the swarm ravages her skin. Her nanovaccine prevents the infection from spreading beyond that.

If asked, paramedics among the Flashspear unit will give emergency medical treatment to Soleni, though they will recommend getting her to a proper medical facility ASAP. They will not transport her themselves, since cleansing the Plague in the area is their top priority. Nora will know there is a doctor at the nearby Salina Wayport.

After the mission, Soleni will receive either a cybernetic limb replacement or a biological replacement at the GM's discretion. Regardless, the princess will bear the scars and the fear of the Plague for the rest of her life.

GM NOTE
To adjust for tables uncomfortable with harm to children, have Soleni instead fall unconscious and tone down descriptions. The comatose princess still needs medical attention at the spaceport to ensure she has not sustained serious injury.

MOVING ON

The Flashspear unit's hovership lands on site and covers the area with an extensive dusklight field. As the ship begins a drilling operation to send dusklight deep into the ground, templars incinerate the bodies of the dusk drakes to flush out any Plague nanites hiding inside living biological matter. A small group of specialized mechs set up a perimeter, resplendent in white, gold, and blue armored chassis.

Other templars will approach the PCs and check if they need medical treatment and to ensure that their nanovaccine is up to date. They will ask the PCs to wait for within dusklight to ensure the nanovaccine removes any trace of the Plague from their bodies. During this time, the PCs can rest and repair.

The Flashspear unit's ship is not capable of leaving Tilimsan's orbit, and the unit is not willing to leave off their priority of cleansing the Plague. Templars are more than willing to speak about Lumenism, the Church, or the Plague should any PCs engage with them.

Once the group leaves Scar Valley, they will be able to proceed directly to Salina Wayport. Proceed to **Beat: Warm Welcome.**

BEAT 0-A2: WARM WELCOME

SALINA WAYPORT

The remote spaceport is only a few buildings and a landing bowl which holds a subline corvette, the *Dahlia,* a black-hulled ship. The area is guarded by Dust Devils. If the PCs met and fought the Dust Devils while crossing the dunes, then these models are different from those that were pursuing the group in the desert and they have working (though falsified) transponders.

Black smoke rises from burn pits as the mercenaries destroy the fake goods being 'shipped' to Tilimsan on the *Dahlia.* As the PCs approach the wayport, Tilimsan's sun will begin to rise on the northeastern horizon and shed warming light over the desert. Jutta awaits the princess's arrival if she hasn't already been abducted. His mech lies hidden in the sand nearby (a fact that an eagle-eyed PC may notice), and he will mount it the moment there is trouble.

If Soleni was already abducted, than Jutta has already dropped the pretense and is prepared for the PCs in his mech.

The scene that transpires will depend on a few factors:

- How the PCs approach the spaceport:
  - ◊ **Assault:** Skip to **Combat: Pants on Fire.**
  - ◊ **Friendly:** See the **Friendly Approach** section.
  - ◊ **Stealth:** See the **Stealthy Approach** section.
- Soleni's status:
  - ◊ Healthy
  - ◊ Injured
  - ◊ Kidnapped
- Whether the PCs know Jutta intends to kidnap Soleni.

FRIENDLY APPROACH

If the PCs approach the spaceport openly, they will be instructed by Dust Devil guards to remain at the edge of the perimeter and not allow them to pass. They are allowed to approach dismounted, though this will ultimately put the PCs in danger if they choose to do so.

If combat begins while the PCs are out of their mechs, they may quickly return to their mechs with a successful skill challenge. If they fail, they begin **Combat: Pants on Fire** outside of their mechs.

SOLENI HEALTHY

Jutta will be waiting in the shade of a building to greet the group. Soleni will leap off the ATV (or dismount a PC's mech) and go running to meet Jutta in person unless she is stopped by a PC. Nora will be a step behind her, calling after her. If they meet, Soleni and Jutta will speak about the following points:

- Soleni is clearly happy to see a family friend.
  - ◊ **Soleni:** *"Jazine told me to say hi for her! She wants you to stop working so hard and visit more."*
  - ◊ **Jutta:** *"Ha! If only I could, but her father's work leaves little personal time."*
- Nora will insist on getting a move on. Jutta will mention that the *Dahlia* is just finishing refueling and pre-flight checks.
- Jutta will say that unfortunately there's no room, nor any need for the PCs and that he's using his own trusted security forces. Nora grows suspicious and demands to bring the PCs instead.
- A standoff results as Jutta refuses Nora's demands, confusing Soleni. Eventually he grows frustrated and drops the facade, ordering the Dust Devils to seize the pair of them and get rid of the PCs. This leads into **Combat: Pants on Fire.**

The PCs can interrupt at any point to ask questions or to begin hostilities once they grow suspicious.

SOLENI INJURED

The PCs are halted at the perimeter and Nora shouts at Jutta that 'the child' needs medical attention immediately. Soleni is taken by stretcher into one of the buildings and the PCs are told to wait. An hour passes until the Wayport's sole doctor announces that Soleni is out of danger, sleeping, and ready for transport to a proper hospital.

At this point, an argument similar to the one in the **Soleni Healthy** section breaks out between Jutta and Nora, eventually resulting in **Combat: Pants on Fire,** but with Soleni inside the medical facility. If the PCs begin hostilities during Soleni's treatment, this will complicate matters during combat.

SOLENI KIDNAPPED

Nora does not leave the safety of the PCs' side and the argument between Nora and Jutta swiftly devolves into violence as it becomes obvious that Jutta has kidnapped Soleni. Proceed to **Combat: Pants on Fire.**

STEALTHY APPROACH

If the PCs decide to approach the spaceport stealthily, they will have to leave their mechs behind, or else the Dust Devils will pick them up on their Sensors immediately.

It's recommended to handle this narratively with racing clocks; one clock represents reaching a goal (see below) and the second clock represents the suspicion of the Dust Devil's prior to raising the alarm. Nora and Soleni (if available) will assist when they can. If they enter buildings and investigate, they may find communications from Lord Harrakh ordering Jutta to abduct Soleni.

If the PCs raise the alarm, the area goes on lockdown and they cannot accomplish whatever goal they were attempting. Dust Devils are mobilized to track down and kill the PCs. Have the PCs complete a skill challenge to quickly return to their mechs. If they fail, they start **Combat: Pants on Fire** outside of their mechs.

SOLENI HEALTHY

The PCs' only required goal is to get aboard the *Dahlia* and commandeer it to fly away from the spaceport.

SOLENI INJURED

Before going to the *Dahlia,* the PCs need to get Soleni to the medical facility and get treated. The PCs may attempt to treat her themselves, force the doctor to treat her, or take the doctor and their supplies along with them.

SOLENI KIDNAPPED

Before going to the *Dahlia,* the PCs need to rescue Soleni from a holding cell. The Dust Devils are almost done preparing the *Dahlia* for take off, and are planning to leave with Soleni soon.

COMBAT 0-A2:
PANTS ON FIRE

Sitrep: Escort

Enemy Forces

For 3 PCs: **1x Jutta, 'Djinn' - T1 Specialist Mercenary Assassin (Specialist:** Survivor*; **Mercenary:** Last Word)
1x T1 **Archer**
1x T1 **Mirage**
1x T1 **Pyro** (Unshielded Reactor)

For 4 PCs: +1x T1 **Veteran Rainmaker (Veteran:** +Systems, Viper's Speed)

For 5 PCs: +1x T1 **Archer**
Assassin: Add the **Elite** template and the **Cloud Projector** system.

Reinforcements

For 3 PCs: 1x T1 **Veteran Rainmaker (Veteran:** +Systems, Viper's Speed)
1x T1 **Archer**
1x T1 **Mirage**
1x T1 **Pyro** (Unshielded Reactor)

For 4 PCs: +1x T1 **Mirage**

For 5 PCs: +1x T1 **Pyro** (Unshielded Reactor)
+3x **Grunt Cataphracts**

*Jutta is a T1 **Human** with a **Ranged Weapon.**

THE STAKES

The Dust Devils threaten to abduct Soleni and depart Tilimsan with the princess in tow. Nora stands in defence of her ward, but even the best Vigilant is ill-equipped to take on mechs. Thus it falls to the PCs to fight their way to the *Dahlia* and secure passage offworld. The House of Thorns needs Soleni alive for their plans, so they will avoid harming her at all costs.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

See the rules for Holdout (*Lancer Core Rulebook* pg 272). Soleni and Nora, the **Size 1/2 Objective,** must reach the **EZ** around the *Dahlia.* Each **Objective** cannot be targeted or attacked while there is an adjacent PC to shield them.

This is made substantially easier if the PCs have **Expanded Compartments,** which allows the PCs to transport both princess and Vigilant without needing to physically move an **Objective.**

Narratively, Nora spends her time in combat killing approaching, unmounted Dust Devils who try to separate her from Soleni or stall her.

If Soleni was injured or kidnapped, then the extraction process becomes complicated. See the **Nora and Soleni Deployment** section.

DETAILS

Present within the scene are the complications of the chemical spill and the crane arms atop buildings.

CHEMICAL SPILL

The pond on the map is actually a pool of dumped chemicals. If any character standing in the pool receives damage, or any part of the pool is targeted by an attack or is included in an area of effect that deals damage, the pool will ignite and become **dangerous terrain** (dealing **energy damage).**

Neither Soleni nor Nora will step into the spill, but if they do end up in it, the Dust Devils won't risk setting the pool on fire while Soleni is inside it.

CRANE ARMS

Throughout the map are mechanized crane arms for moving freight. The cranes are objects (**Size** 1, **HP** 10, **Evasion** 5, **E-Defense** 8). A hacker can seize control of them to throw nearby mechs. If a crane is hit with a **tech attack** the attacker chooses a target within **Range 3** of the Crane. The target can make a **Hull** save against the attacker's **Save Target** with **+2 Difficulty.** On a failure, the target is pulled to any space on the ground within **Range 5** of the Crane, ignoring obstructions along the way. Each crane can only be successfully hacked 1/round.

GM NOTE

If this is the GM's and/or your players' first time playing Lancer, you may wish to tone down and simplify this combat. If so, remove the enemy's optional systems (i.e. Unshielded Reactor, Viper's Speed, etc.), and consider removing any templates other than Grunt (Veteran, Elite, etc.).

DEPLOYMENT

The deployment of all characters in this scene will depend heavily on the narrative events leading up to the start of combat.

PC DEPLOYMENT

The PCs will typically deploy in the **ADZ** on the western edge of the map. If PCs dismounted to enter the spaceport during the **Friendly Approach** or the **Stealthy Approach** and failed to return to their mechs, then the PCs will begin as pilots on foot **10 spaces away** from their mechs, which they left at the western edge of the map.

ENEMY DEPLOYMENT

The Dust Devils will be deployed around the spaceport initially in cover and behind buildings. If Soleni and Nora began the fight separated from the PCs, at least one NPC will be deployed adjacent to them to prevent the PCs from immediately moving them.

NORA AND SOLENI DEPLOYMENT

The deployment location for the princess and her Vigilant will vary depending on narrative events. They may deploy together with the PCs in the **ADZ,** or they may deploy in the middle of the spaceport, or they might even deploy separately. In this last case, they are treated as separate **Objectives** until brought together.

If Soleni was injured and taken for treatment or if she was captured, she is not immediately visible. If injured, she was taken to the medical facility for treatment. If kidnapped, she was taken to a holding cell. In either case, Nora's tracking device points to Soleni's location. The medical facility and the holding cell are colocated in the southeastern building.

EXTRACTING SOLENI

If Soleni is either in treatment or kidnapped, the PCs can bring Nora to the southern entrance of the southeastern building. The Vigilant will enter and rescue Soleni with violence and threats. Nora will return with Soleni at the **end of the next round.**

If Soleni was injured, Nora will be carrying her. If the PCs jumped the gun and attacked before Soleni could be fully stabilized, it will take Nora an **additional round** to quickly grab medical supplies for the ride.

TACTICS

The Dust Devils are mercenaries, eager for a payday and less eager to die for the cause. Jutta, who is a true believer amongst the agents of the House of Thorns, will push the mercs to earn their pay and fight more recklessly to secure the princess. If he is taken out of action, the remaining Devils will change tactics, preferring cover and caution over charging in, even if it means the PCs get away.

ARCHER

Their purpose is to slow down the advancement of the **Objective** by punishing anyone trying to move them. Use **Suppress** on enemies adjacent to the **Objective** to force them to either take the hit to move forward, or let someone else do the moving.

ASSASSIN - DJINN

As the sole melee unit, Jutta is best suited for preventing the enemies from moving the **Objective** by standing adjacent to it while fighting. He will wait for a Mirage to apply **Invisible** to him before he jumps into the fray. With **Invisible,** the Assassin is substantially more durable. If available, the **Cloud Projector** system can help lockdown the frontline by preventing enemies from firing into it.

When Jutta's mech is destroyed, **Survivor** will activate to momentarily save him. From there, the GM may either have Jutta continue to order around the Dust Devils on foot, or have him run to the edge of the map and try to escape. If he does escape, the GM can feel free to use Jutta in future events involving the House of Thorns.

GRUNT CATAPHRACT

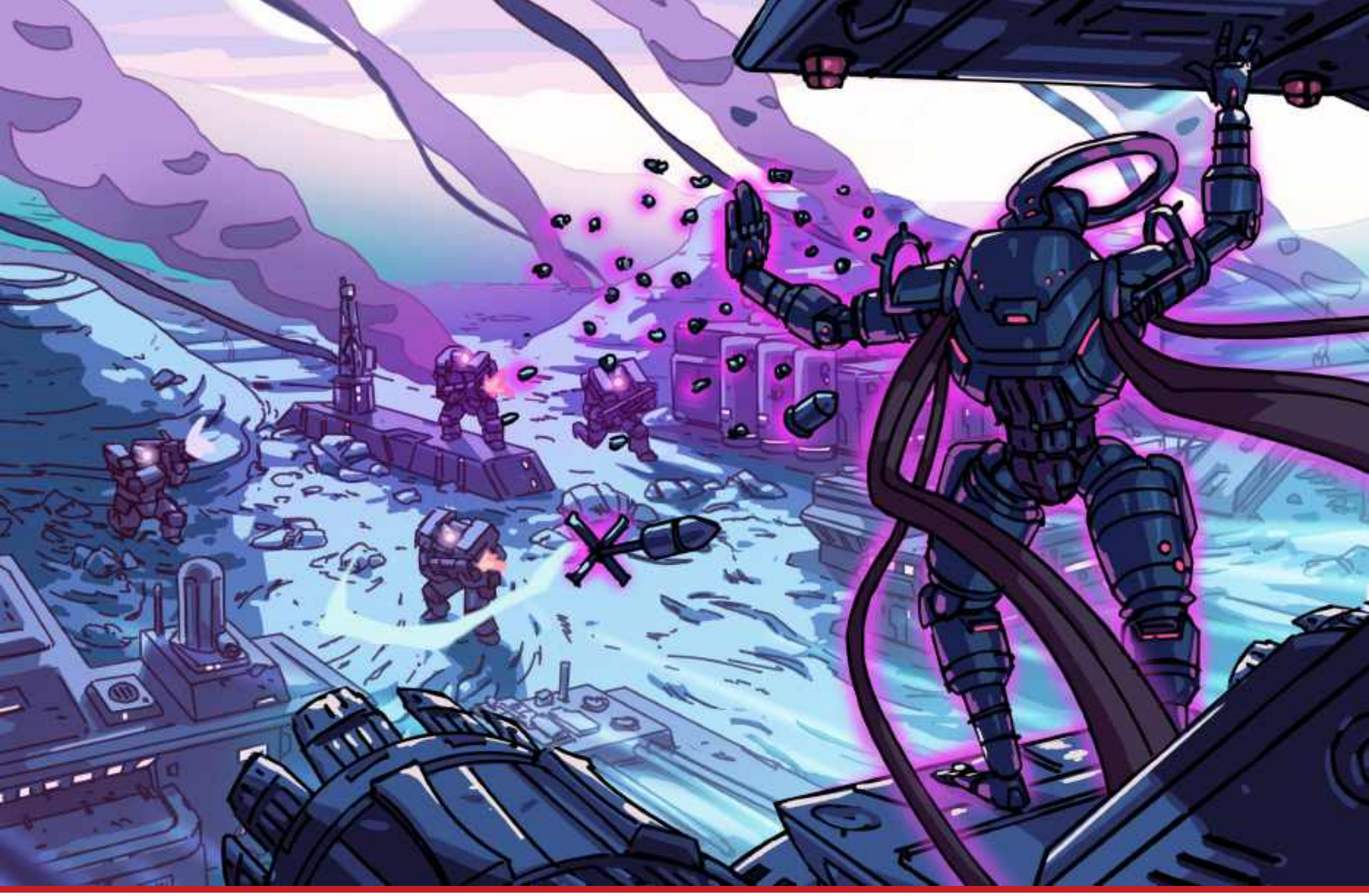
Use this NPC's high **Speed** for hit and run tactics to avoid taking damage. Zip out of cover, attack, then move back to safety, using **Boost** if necessary. If the PCs are nearing the **EZ** with the **Objective,** the Cataphracts can act as a last ditch defense to stop them by charging with **Impale** to push them back.

MIRAGE

The grease that brings everything else together. Pyros too slow? Teleport them into better positions with **Glitch Scanners** and **Blip.** Assassin or Rainmaker too fragile? Use **Dataveil** to make them **Invisible.** Be the annoying gremlin that makes this fight hell. Just don't get caught in the open; the Mirage breaks when looked at too harshly.

PYRO

This slow-moving clunker will do their best to lockdown the paths and alleyways between buildings, using the **FIREBREAK Shield** to provide protection for themselves and those nearby. The Pyro is somewhat limited by the presence of the **Objective;** watch your **Flamethrower** cones so you don't end up burning the princess. However, the **Objective** cannot be targeted while PCs are adjacent to them, so fire at will.



OUTCOME

PC VICTORY

The PCs, Nora, and Soleni are able to take off with the *Dahlia* and leave the Dust Devils and Tilimsan behind. After a weeklong trip, they meet up with Prince Altair aboard Armada 9 Khayradin's flagship, the *AENS Snapdragon.*

PC DEFEAT

Defeat can take two forms. If the scene ends with a PC adjacent to the **Objective** (including Soleni), they can secure the princess and extract from the spaceport. Otherwise, Soleni is separated from Nora and kidnapped.

Soleni Kidnapped: If the PCs are unable to rescue Princess Soleni, then she is flown away aboard the Dahlia. Eventually she is transported to Beacon for cloning and is not seen again until Act 2.

Soleni Secured: If the PCs are able to extract Soleni from the spaceport but are marooned on Beacon, Nora will put out an emergency request for extraction over official channels. Soleni's runaway plan ends here with Annorate forces on Tilimsan arriving to pick her up and return her to the capital on Karrakis.

Soleni will request the PCs go on to meet with Altair and help him, since he shouldn't be without friends. The 5th Princess has just enough authority to get them assigned (if their background requires a military assignment) to Armada 9 Khayradin. The PCs are also provided transport to get them aboard the *AENS Snapdragon.*

Later, Soleni is abducted by state actors within the Annorum and sent to Beacon for cloning and reprogramming. She is not seen again until Act 2.

MISSION OUTCOME

The group, or whatever remains of it, arrives on the *AENS Snapdragon* as it leads Armada 9 Khayradin to Uinta Station. Aboard the ship are Prince Altair Empyrea, Marshal Samuel Ludov, and Lady Galea Vebelle. The nature of the meeting with Altair will depend on Soleni's status.

SOLENI ARRIVES

The princess's plan worked. However, the sheer violence that she has witnessed has left her shaken and doubtful, especially if she was injured or abducted during the mission. She does her best to hide this by putting up a carefree front, but the trauma remains.

It's a wonderful surprise for Altair when Soleni suddenly appears.

> **Altair:** *Smiling widely, the prince just laughs. "I can't believe that father agreed to this!"*
>
> **Soleni:** *Sheepishly, the princess bites her lip and avoids meeting his eyes. "Well… about that."*

Despite his initial misgivings, Nora will step in and convince Altair that it might be safer for the Princess on Beacon than in the Concern. The attempts to kidnap Soleni have only further convinced the Vigilant.

For their efforts in bringing Soleni to him, Altair will provide each PC with their choice of one of the following **Reserves: Ammo (+2)**, **Extra Repairs,** and **Redundant Repair.** If they prevented Soleni from being injured in **Combat: Scar Tissue,** he'll additionally reward them with one **Core Battery** for every two PCs.

SOLENI KIDNAPPED

Altair is devastated to learn of his sister's kidnapping.

> **Altair:** *"You are the same Apprentice Vigilant who was with us when my mother was killed."*
>
> **Nora:** *"Yes, I failed then as well." Nora slumps to one knee in front of him, head low in shame. "The fault lies with me alone."*
>
> **Altair:** *"You are Vigilant no longer. I strip you of the title. It… hurts to look at you. Get out. Go, find my sister. Do not show your face to me again until you do." Altair seems haunted by his own words.*
>
> **Nora:** *The ex-Vigilant's voice wavers as she speaks, "Yes, my prince." She rises and departs on unsteady legs.*

Altair pleads with Admiral Ludov to send a force to hunt down the ship that took Soleni from Tilimsan and scour the system for her. Ludov obliges by leaving ships behind. Make a note of this, and untick one segment of the **Annorum Strength** clock when it's created at the start of Act 1.

Alas, Altair himself is bound by the word of the Anno to proceed to Beacon, and his father will not change his mind nor trust him with the search for Soleni. While he does not blame the PCs for losing Soleni, since they didn't even know they were escorting a princess to begin with, neither does he trust them yet.

SOLENI SECURED

The princess is not with the PCs, so there's no reunion, but nor is the princess in any obvious, immediate danger. Altair will meet with the PCs when they board the *Snapdragon.* He asks them to relate the events of the mission.

> **Altair:** *The prince shakes his head. "That sounds like my sister. She always was an impulsive little troublemaker. I'm sorry that you were caught up in her schemes. Still… I would have liked to have seen her. Thank you, at least, for keeping her safe."*

LORD HARRAKH

If the PCs hold evidence of Lord Harrakh's orchestration of the kidnapping plot, they can make it known to Altair or Ludov. Either will have an investigation launched into Harrakh, who will be detained. Harrakh will go peacefully, trusting that he will be freed once the House of Thorns seizes power, and won't reveal their secrets. Instead, he'll claim it was a plot to ransom the princess back to the Annorate throne for money.

For providing information leading to Harrakh's arrest, the PCs are awarded **Environmental Shielding** as **Reserves** from the House of Sand for rooting out their corruption. The equipment arrives with a note from one of the House's precognitive augurs, who believes the PCs will need it soon.

UINTA STATION

Traveling with the armada, the PCs soon arrive at the Uinta blink station. From here, refer to **Beat: Moths to Flame.**

MISSION 0-U: PLAGUESHIP

TORUS: "If Admiral Payne is dead and I'm incommunicado, that means the chain of command falls to…"
BAILEY: "That would be Captain Brach, sir."
TORUS: "No, not-- you can't be serious. Anyone but him!"
BAILEY: "Captain Brach is highly decorated."
TORUS: "So is a cake, but I can at least trust the cake not to shit itself."

MISSION BEATS

BEAT: TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES

COMBAT: FREELOADERS

BEAT: UNDER THE WEATHER

COMBAT: 99.9% OF GERMS

CLOCKS

MOUNT UP

GAP CLOSED

FORWARD!

PLAGUE SPREADING

SUMMARY

The Prime battlegroup of the Union's 14th Fleet has been attacked by a smaller Annorate naval group, resulting in the death of the 14th's Admiral. During the subsequent battle, Syndicate Bravo mercenaries on the *UNS-BB Chekhov* sabotage the ship's communication capabilities, then begin a manhunt for Representative Royce Merrick, scouring the ship for him. The PCs must restore the ship's comms to let the battlegroup's second in command, Commander Torus, regain control of the battle.

To reach stored mechs, the PCs cross the embattled ship on foot. When the PCs and Union marines start getting the upper hand, the mercenaries decide to scuttle the ship by releasing an Argent Plague swarm and activating nullight generators to disable the dusklight countermeasures. The PCs must race against the Plague to destroy the nullight generators before the ship is consumed.

CHARACTERS

- Aleksey Torus: Currently a Commander, but will become Admiral by the end of the mission.
- Emma Bailey
- Royce Merrick
- Berke Rotterdam
- Vodena Park
- Oppani Nai

RECOMMENDED READING

- Union: FourthComm
- Argent Plague (Prometheus Flame)
- Dusklight
- Nullight

PC UNINVOLVEMENT

If the PCs do not undertake this mission, most likely due to being on a different Path, then the *Chekhov* survives without them. The rookie mech pilots aboard the ship manage to heroically sacrifice themselves to reach their mechs, restore comms, then destroy the nullight generators.

THE SITUATION

The PCs and Battlegroup Sirius are on the verge of disaster. Only quick action can avert that fate. The following is the situation at the start of the mission.

AMBUSH

Battlegroup Sirius is en route to Gasherbrum, a blink station, to link up with the other Union battlegroups on their way to Beacon. They stop to refuel and resupply at Dorenzi, an HIC station orbiting the dark, icy planet of Sable. While resupplying, an interception naval group from the Annorum stealthily approached and launched a long-range kinetic barrage that struck too swiftly for ships to take evasive action. While overall damage was low, Admiral Payne was killed aboard his carrier in this initial attack, and the battlegroup is now in disarray.

ASSASSINATION

Commander Torus, next in the chain of command, was ready to assume Payne's role until stowaway mercenaries aboard his ship, the *UNS-BB Chekhov,* emerged from cargo containers. They secured a docking bay, and sunk a data spike into the ship's communications hub. This disabled both the ship's comms array and disrupted the *Chekhov's* strategic NHP's connection to legionspace. Stealth transport ships brought the full force of the mercenaries onboard through one of the *Chekhov's* landing bays.

Now the ship is mute, and mercenary squads and mechs move from compartment to compartment, slaughtering whoever they find. The mercenary group Syndicate Bravo has been hired by Oppani Nai, an Autonomist representative of CentComm, and a small group of co-conspirators. The mercenaries' mission is to find and kill Royce Merrick.

The Autonomists correctly believe Royce poses a threat to Union's currently profitable status of slow simmering war with the Annorum. While the mercenaries' original plan was to wait until the battlegroup arrived at Beacon and act during the initial skirmishes, the Annorum's surprise attack provided an opportunity. If they're able to confirm Royce's death, they will exit the ship via the same transport ships they arrived on.

Unfortunately for the assassins, Royce's bodyguard, Berke, has secured the representative in his mech's **Expanded Compartments.** With the legendary lancer as his guardian, Royce is in little danger. The same cannot be said for the rest of the ship's crew.

Objectives:	Remove the data spike blocking communications and route the mercenary forces aboard the *Chekhov.*
Parameters:	The PCs will not initially have access to their mechs, though they will have their pilot equipment. To access the mechs, they must reach the cache.
Stakes:	Battlegroup Sirius is at risk of being devastated if communications are not restored, and the Chekhov is at further risk from the mercenaries aboard.
Reward:	Depending on the PCs' performance, they may be awarded **Reserves.** They will also advance to LL 1.

UNPREDICTABILITY GAP

With Torus unable to issue commands, the next officer in the chain of command should step in, but Captain Brach is incompetent and freezing up like a deer in the headlights. He has issued a few ineffectual commands, and otherwise spends most of his time anxiously berrating the other ship Captains who question him.

As a result, coordination between the other ships of the battlegroup has fallen into chaos. They have defaulted into evasive maneuvers and unsuccessful firing patterns. Though Union's ships outnumber the Annorum's, the battlegroup finds itself at a severe strategic disadvantage as the enemy closes in. Once the unpredictability gap is closed, and each capital ship's powerful primary weapons come into play, the chips will fall where they may, and not to the Union's advantage.

INTERROGATING PRISONERS

If the PCs manage to capture and interrogate any members of Syndicate Bravo, they will learn very little. The Bravos were hired via dead drop funds through an intermediary to kill Royce Merrick by any means necessary without harming Vodena Park. The Autonomists cannot be easily linked to this attempted assassination.

BEAT 0-U1:
TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES

A shuttle returning from Dorenzi station bears the *Chekhov's* veteran mech pilots, who are unaware of the mechanized mercenaries aboard the ship. The crew onboard can only watch as they approach an ambush.

In zero-g, the ball ricochets off a seat, a shuttle window, a laser-pack rifle, and someone's face before finally the errant missile is caught. Hooting and hollering, the best and the brightest veteran mech pilots of Union relieve pre-fight tension the only way they know how: dumb shenanigans.

Then a salvo of fist-sized munitions drill holes through shuttle and passenger alike, venting air and blood into the void. From the open hangar door of the UNS-BB Chekhov, the polished black mech lets its rotary cannon cease spinning, its barrels an angry red. It withdraws from the opening, continuing the hunt inside.

On the command deck, Commander Aleksey Torus morosely stares out the window at the shuttle wreckage as its pieces slowly migrate away from each other. Shaking his head, he uncorks a bottle of silvery vodka. He begins skillfully pouring the liquor into vibrating spheres, or zero-g shots, which float through the crowded room.

Torus: *"A toast to the brave pilots of Union, or what's left of them."*

The command deck is packed with marines and noncombatants who took shelter when the shooting started. The doors have been locked and barricaded, and marines stand guard, having already repelled one attack.

Some leap to catch the zero-g shots in midair, and the PCs can partake if they choose. Lieutenant Bailey stands at disapproving attention as she watches Torus finish off the bottle. Then the Commander turns and gets down to business.

BRIEFING

The lead up to the briefing for the mission may differ depending on the PC's chosen background for their Path. If the PCs work directly for Union as pilots, they receive orders to undertake the mission. Otherwise, Commander Torus asks for volunteers to undertake a dangerous mission, and none are immediately willing to step forward. Hopefully the PCs are willing, otherwise it's going to be a very short campaign.

Torus briefs the PCs the about the following topics, with Bailey providing additional details:

- Torus lays out the broad situation quickly:
  - ◊ The Annorum's attack.
  - ◊ Admiral Payne's death.
  - ◊ Hostile mechs and gunmen roam the ship compartments killing anyone they see on sight.
  - ◊ The *Chekhov's* comms are dead, and the battlegroup is a headless chicken.
  - ◊ The unpredictability gap is closing, time is running out.
- A cold cache of mechs (either the PCs' or those that belong to deceased pilots) is tagged as functional, unlike most of the shipboard chassis, which were destroyed by the mercenaries.
- The PCs must reach the mech cache on foot, boot them up, reach the communications hub and remove the spike.
  - ◊ **Torus:** *"I know, I know. Hardly fair to ask you to go risk your lives out there. Well, just being here is a risk. Odds are good we get blown up with the rest of the battlegroup. The privilege of being Commander is that I get to die in the comfy chair."*

    There's a gentle 'whapping' sound as Lt. Bailey's palm connects with her forehead.
- Lt. Bailey informs the PCs that the marines on the command deck and in nearby compartments are waiting for the signal to start a firefight with the nearest groups of mercs in order to provide an initial distraction for the PCs.
- If asked about the attackers on the ship, Torus will hypothesize that some cargomasters smuggle cargo on Union ships. A lucrative offer came along, and someone loaded killers packed into containers onto the ship at a previous port, no questions asked. Once the killers disrupted comms and took a docking bay, bringing in stealthed transport ships full of troops would be easy in the chaos of naval battle.

REACHING THE MECHS

In order to reach the data spike and restore comms, the PCs will need mechs from the cold cache, which sits near the comms center. In order to reach the cache, the PCs must cross the hostile territory of the ship.

The PCs can attempt to disable the spike without mechs, but it is closely guarded by a sizable force of Syndicate Bravo mechs. Any foolhardy attempts to disable the spike on foot would likely require **risky, difficult checks.**

The mercenaries are engaged with the onboard marines. While the marines outnumber the mercenaries, they find themselves outgunned by the hostile mechs roaming the larger halls. Most marines and noncombatants have barricaded themselves into smaller compartments. Still, there have been hundreds of casualties, and the PCs will cross several scenes of grisly carnage along the way.

The ship's body consists of multiple centrifugal cylinders, some of which have broken in the fighting, so gravity may be inconsistent.

CLOCKS

Start two racing clocks: a six-segment goal clock called 'Mount Up' and a six-segment threat clock called 'Gap Closed'.

Tick a segment on the **Mount Up** clock whenever an obstacle is overcome that brings the PCs closer to the mech cache. Tick a segment on the **Gap Closed** clock whenever time is lost. These events should typically occur as a result of success or failure on a **check** (or a series of **checks**).

There are two primary routes through the ship:

- The PCs can travel through corridors and compartments, taking their chances by assaulting or avoiding the mercenary infantry and mechs they come across.
- Alternatively, they can delve into the guts of the *Chekhov* and try to navigate a path to the cache through its ventilation shafts and the unsafe slip spaces between bulkheads.
- They can also mix it up and switch between the two.

Begin by having the marines in the command deck and other nearby compartments start an assault (as mentioned by Lt. Bailey) to cover the PCs' first move into their route. Use the **Corridor and Compartment Obstacles** and **Ship Internal Obstacles** tables to determine the obstacles the PCs may face when proceeding along each route, each of which must be overcome by **checks.** Use them until either clock is filled.

If the **Mount Up** clock is filled, the PCs have reached the mech cache. If **Gap Closed** is filled, the battle is engaged at Union's disadvantage, leading to the loss of most of the ships of Battlegroup Sirius. The PCs can still reach the mech cache, though it's too late to make a difference in the naval battle.

If the GM wishes to be 'merciful', they may offer the PCs a free tick on **Mount Up** if they bum rush the mech cache. However, if they do so, Syndicate Bravo will be on top of them before they can get the cold mechs ready to fight. The PCs will start **Combat: Freeloaders** with the **Shut Down** status, and must **Boot Up** their mech before they can act.

CACHE RETRIEVED

The retrieval of the mech cache will not go unnoticed by Syndicate Bravo, especially not so close to the mission-critical data spike. Tracking the signal of the mechs' reactors as they flare to life, the mercenaries will attempt to put down any resistance before it gains legs.

Proceed to **Combat: Freeloaders.**

CORRIDOR AND COMPARTMENT OBSTACLES

ROLL 1D6	
1	A voice calls from around a corner: *"Come out Royce, or we'll toss these janitors out the airlock. Then there'll be nobody left to wipe your ass clean!"* A few harsh voices laugh as if it's the funniest thing in the world.
2	A pure oxygen leak and a spark have lit the finer officers' quarters alight. Now passing through will be difficult due to intense flames and smoke.
3	After entering an apparently quiet and empty mess hall, the silence is shattered by the screech of metal and the crunch of mech treads just outside the far door. The PCs have only a moment to react.
4	The hallway looks empty and safe. Too safe. The GM can choose one of these obstacles to line the hallway or randomly determine it with a D6. They can even roll multiple times to mix and match. **1.** Stealthed, heat-seeking mines. **2.** Invisible razor wire. **3.** Wall mounted auto-turrets. **4.** Hidden mercenaries prepared for an ambush. **5.** Translucent superglue covering every surface. **6.** Nothing, except fear of the unknown.
5	Bodies and blood float. The sniper dreams of partners for their final dance.
6	A couple mercenaries will 'surrender' to the PCs, then ask to be taken to Royce Merrick to deliver intel about the mercs in exchange for clemency for themselves. If it becomes clear the PCs are not taking them to Royce, they will attempt to sabotage their efforts.

SHIP INTERNAL OBSTACLES

ROLL 1D6	
1	The slipspace has become deluged with a dark fluid from some damaged ship component. Proceeding will mean immersing the PCs in smothering darkness.
2	The *Chekhov's* waste management system keeps toilets running and water clean. It creates a maze of plumbing, filtration systems, chemical cleansing processes, and other dangerous obstacles. Worst of all, it stinks!
3	A grate is loudly pried open and flashlights shine into the gloom. Mercs are investigating some noises coming from the ventilation shafts.
4	The shaft passes through an enormous spinning ventilation fan with no obvious way around. The fan's steel blades are primed for dismemberment.
5	The PCs run into some noncombatant crew members who have hid themselves in the grating or ventilation. There's a passing patrol, and some of the crew are quietly arguing over whether they should try to attack them, or stay hidden and hope they aren't found.
6	The coolant chambers near the reactor have leaked into nearby utility zones so that they're overwhelming hardsuit internal heating. The PCs will freeze to death if they don't act quickly.

COMBAT 0-U1:
FREELOADERS

Sitrep: N/A

Enemy Forces

For 3 PCs:	1x T1 **Veteran Mercenary Demolisher** (**Veteran:** +Hull, Limitless; **Mercenary:** Scout Drone) 1x T1 **Assault** 1x T1 **Hive** (Driving Swarm) 1x T1 **Mercenary Support** (**Mercenary:** Last Word; **Support:** Empowered Cloud)
For 4 PCs:	+1x T1 **Cataphract** (Electrified Lasso) +1x T1 **Mercenary Support** (**Mercenary:** Last Word; **Support:** Empowered Cloud) **Hive:** Add the **Specialist** template and the **Linebreaker** trait.
For 5 PCs:	+1x T1 **Assault** **Demolisher:** Add the **Elite** template and the **Concussion Missiles** system.

Allied Forces

At the start of the 7th round:	**Berke, 'Ogre' -** T3 **Exotic Ultra Demolisher** (Increase **Size** to **3**; **Exotic:** Chronotaurus; **Ultra:** Argus Armor, Lead the Charge, Repulsion Field; **Demolisher:** Broad-Sweep Haft, Kinetic Compensation, Seismic Destroyer; **Other:** Hunter-Killer Nexus (From the **Hive** NPC))

THE STAKES

Syndicate Bravo must see their mission through to the end if they want to get paid, and the PCs threaten their bottom line. If the data spike is disabled, the *Chekhov* will be able to request reinforcements from other ships in the Sirius Battlegroup. The Syndicate only have the upper hand because they surprised the forces aboard the *Chekhov,* prevented pilots from reaching their mechs, and leveraged their current mechanized superiority by separating the marines into pockets. A determined, prepared Union strike team would cut short their hunt for Royce, and potentially close off their escape route.

If the PCs cannot defeat the Syndicate here, the unpredictability gap will close and the Sirius Battlegroup will head into battle leaderless and ripe for the slaughter.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

The battle is won if all enemy mechs are destroyed, or lost if all PC mechs are destroyed.

DETAILS

This combat is a straightforward brawl; the PCs must defeat Syndicate forces or be defeated themselves. However, the clock is ticking. At the start of the 7th round of combat, and at the start of every following round until the combat ends, tick one segment of the **Gap Closed** clock if it hasn't already been filled.

ALLIED FORCES

At the start of the 7th round, Berke, piloting Ogre, will arrive on the battlefield to assist the PCs with wrapping things up. He will appear on any edge of the map, through a wall if necessary. If he does not arrive before the scene ends, he will arrive just as the combat is wrapping up. Royce is in the mech with him.

DEPLOYMENT

Deploy the enemy forces on the northern side of the map atop the raised metal flooring, utilizing cover as much as possible.

The PCs deploy in the **ADZ.**

TACTICS

In this fight, the Syndicate deploys the Demolisher as both literal and figurative hammer, while the other NPCs set up the PCs as railspikes.

ASSAULT

The secondary threat after the Demolisher. Stay on high ground and fire on any target out of position.

GM NOTE

If this is the GM's and/or your players' first time playing Lancer, you may wish to tone down and simplify all combats for this mission. If so, remove the enemy's optional systems (i.e. Scout Drone, Driving Swarm, etc.), and consider removing any templates other than Grunt (Veteran, Elite, etc.). This will result in easier and simpler combats, akin to a tutorial, to familiarize yourselves with Lancer's mechanics.

CATAPHRACT
Despite its status as a **Striker,** the Cataphract will be performing **Controller** duty. Use **Impale** and **Electrified Lasso** to drag enemies across the battlefield and into crushing range of the Demolisher. Push the backline PCs out of their comfort zone and into the line of fire.

DEMOLISHER
The centerpiece and focus of the combat. Slow and plodding, the Demolisher will have difficulty getting within striking distance of ranged PCs without assistance from the other NPCs. Try to keep to the high ground as much as possible until the PCs bring the fight into the lower central canal; once the Demolisher jumps down, it will take many turns to climb back out.

Don't be afraid to use **Limitless** to either surprise the PCs with a **Boost** or deploy the **Scout Drone** for additional accuracy once the Demolisher is in a good position to wreak havoc. Feel free to **Dig In** to reduce damage since the Support can remove the resulting **Slowed** condition. **Concussion Missiles** can also help slow down the PCs and prevent them from getting away.

HIVE
An enabler for the Demolisher. Use **Drone Barrage** to drive the PCs out of cover and toward the Demolisher. If possible, move the PCs through the **Razor Swarms,** then chain that together with forced movement from **Driving Swarm** to move them even further. If **Linebreaker** is in effect, use the **Hunter-Killer Nexus** for fine positioning of the PCs.

SUPPORT
If the PCs lack area of effect weapons, stay near the Demolisher to heal them. Use **Empowered Cloud** to remove any movement-reduced conditions, including the self-inflicted **Slowed** from the Demolisher's **Dig In.** Spray PCs near the Demolisher with the **Sealant Gun** to slow them, but be careful not to spread **difficult terrain** into areas the Demolisher needs to move through.

When reduced to half **HP,** the Support should use **Last Word** if it can disable any PCs attacking from close range. Don't worry too much if the Demolisher gets **Jammed; Empowered Cloud** can remove it as well.

OGRE
Cross the distance to the enemies using **Lead the Charge.** Despite the massive Tier differential, even the Tier 3 Demolisher's **Demolition Hammer** is still rather inaccurate, and may miss with an unlucky roll. To avoid whiffing and looking lame in front of the rookies, get into range for **Repulsion Field,** use **Seismic Destroyer** to disable the enemy, **Hunter-Killer Nexus** at range, and **Broad-Sweep Haft** to strike multiple targets. Try to use the hammer only when you have a source of **Accuracy** against the target.

Even if the PCs did poorly and most of the NPCs are still in fighting shape, Berke should have little difficulty in wiping out the mercenaries. Focus on destroying the enemy Demolisher first, followed by the Hives. Between the Ogre's **Argus Armor** and high **HP,** the other mechs will be unlikely to pose any threat.

OUTCOME
PC VICTORY
The Syndicate Bravo mechs in the area are destroyed and the others are forced to pull back into more defensive positions. The PCs have the opportunity to disable the data spike.

PC DEFEAT
If the PCs' mechs are destroyed, this battle ends in their defeat. Berke enters the scene, if he is not already in it, and he finishes off the remaining Syndicate forces in the area, though they stall him long enough for the **Gap Closed** clock to fill. If the **Gap Closed** clock was filled before this combat began, then the further delay results in the **Spreading Plague** clock (described in the next beat) starting with one segment already filled.

If the PCs are unable to reconstruct their mechs and continue the mission, then it ends in complete failure. Treat the next section as if the **Spreading Plague** clock is filled, since the PCs aren't in a position to destroy the nullight generators.

DISABLING THE SPIKE
The PCs can find the data spike lodged in the *Chekhov's* datacore. The spike appears as a glowing, mech-sized lance that pierces the housing. The PCs can choose to either quickly destroy it or attempt to extract it. Extracting it requires a **check,** and risks ticking the **Gap Closed** clock. On a success, it can be used as **Reserves.** If it's not used by the end of the mission, it can be retained for a future mission.

DATA SPIKE
The data spike can be thrown like a javelin as a **quick action** at a character within **Range 8** and line of sight. Make a **ranged attack roll** against the target with **+1 Accuracy.** On a hit, the target takes **2d6+2 kinetic damage** and is **Jammed** and **Impaired** until the end of their next turn, and the data spike is spent. On a miss, the spike comes to rest in a space adjacent to the target where it can be retrieved as a **free action** and used again.

Alternatively, it could be used in narrative play to disable the normal functioning of a network or system on the scale of a capital ship. To do so, the spike must be jammed into a major network node on the system.

BEAT 0-U2:
UNDER THE WEATHER

Once the spike is disabled or destroyed, comms are brought back online. Torus instantly assumes control of the battlegroup and begins issuing a series of pre-planned commands to either gain the upper hand over the Annorum naval group, or pull the battlegroup out of a death spiral if the **Gap Closed** clock was filled. Those on the *Chekhov* are rocked by sudden g-forces as the ship undergoes rapid maneuvers.

Ogre bears superficial battlescars from the mercenaries Berke engaged with on the way. With the immediate danger having passed, Berke will suggest the PCs **rest** while he keeps watch and determines the next plan of action. During this rest, the PCs will have the chance to speak to Royce and Berke:

- Depending on whether the PCs disabled the spike before the **Gap Closed** clock was filled, Royce may be varying levels of complimentary toward the PCs. Regardless, he won't blame the PCs if the naval battle went poorly.
  - ◊ **Royce:** *"With Admiral Payne gone, perhaps now is Commander Torus's time to shine. The expedition fleet will need a new Admiral. If he can kick the Annorum dogs for overstepping themselves, then I'll have found the perfect man for the job."*
- Royce wonders aloud who has sent this kill-team after him.
  - ◊ **Royce:** *"We can probably rule out Annorum spies; this isn't their style. More likely, this hit job was sourced from within Union. Someone back in the Core Worlds? Or someone closer at hand, who wants me out of the way?"*
- Berke is quiet and focused on repairing Ogre, but he keeps a protective eye on Royce. If the PCs or anyone else threatens Royce, Berke will intervene in an instant. While outwardly stoic, he is inwardly furious at the situation, and might vent his anger if spoken to.
  - ◊ **Berke:** *"Hundreds of marines and civilians are dead. Will Union tell their families they died bravely fighting over 'internal political differences'?"*
- Observant PCs may notice toward the end of the rest that any sources of dusklight, such as an LED a faithful Lumenite PC has around their neck, are extinguished.

After this brief interlude, Lieutenant Bailey will contact the PCs, Berke, and Royce to communicate the following:

- The tide of naval battle is turning quickly and Battlegroup Sirius is coming out on top.
- However, there's a new issue. Scanners on the ship have detected breakout swarms of Argent Plague in multiple areas and they are spreading quickly.
- Dusklight generators should have activated automatically, and they have according to diagnostics. Still, dusklight has failed to appear. Moreover, some in the command deck have noticed their dusklight LEDs going dark.
- The only explanation is that the mercenaries have deployed both the Plague and nullight generators to block dusklight. They intend to scuttle the ship and all aboard via swarm.
- The mercs are concentrated in two groups, one in the aft and one in the fore of the *Chekhov,* and the Plague is detected around both. Each site likely has nullight generators.
- In order to stop the Plague, the generators at both sites must be destroyed quickly to allow dusklight to cleanse the ship before the Plague consumes it.

Royce will issue followup orders to the PCs:

- Royce orders the PCs to handle the generators on the the fore of the ship. This is in the same direction they were previously moving, away from the command deck near the aft of the ship.
- Berke and Royce will handle the aft nullight generators.
  - ◊ **Royce:** *"One more thing. If the mercs are using nullight, then they've waived any right to due process and a trial. Execute the bastards."*

SHIP CROSSING

Once the PCs are underway to the fore of the *Chekhov,* they'll encounter different obstacles than previously. In mechs, they'll be unable to move through crawlspaces and the smaller corridors. Instead they will have to use main hallways, freight elevators, and other passages that can accommodate them, of which there are many.

With the chaos of battle being waged in space and within, the swarming Plague is the cherry on top. Getting through this mess will take time, a resource that is in drastically short supply.

CLOCKS

Start two clocks: a four-segment clock called 'Forward!' and a four-segment clock called 'Plague Spreading'. Tick the **Forward!** clock whenever an obstacle is overcome that brings the PCs closer to the mech cache. Tick the **Plague Spreading** clock whenever time is lost on a failed **check** (or series of **checks**).

See the **Damaged Ship Obstacles** table for a list of potential barriers to reaching the nullight generators. With comms restored, the PCs may be able to receive aid from Bailey, who can relay ship blueprints and equipment specifications, granting **+1 Accuracy** if they are relevant.

Once either **Forward!** or **Plague Spreading** is filled, proceed to **Combat: 99.9% of Germs.** If **Plague Spreading** was the clock that filled, large swathes of the *UNS-BB Chekhov* are catastrophically consumed by the Plague. Ultimately, the ship is unsalvageable and many of the crew perish.

DAMAGED SHIP OBSTACLES

ROLL 1D6

1	There's a quick shortcut, but it will take the PCs into and around the generator array. The situation has caused the generators to destabilize with no one on hand to manage the power surges, so now the excess current is irregularly discharging and arcing to nearby machinery. Who built this thing?
2	A swarm of subaltern maintenance drones are crammed into a maintenance shaft and are chaotically disassembling the ship's guts. Having been recently cut off from the ship's NHP, their navigation and control arrays are shot, and now the plasma cutter-wielding bots are dangerous to passersby.
3	A trip through the *Chekhov's* reactor core chamber will trim minutes off the journey, but there's a risk of unintended nucleosynthesis feedback loops between the ship's and the mechs' reactors. If not handled with care, this route could have mechs overheating.
4	A squad of marines are locked in a stalemate of a firefight with mercenaries inside a large hangar bay. The way forward is past the mercs, but they've set up a defensible position with mines and heavy turrets.
5	The corridor dead ends in collapse due to damage from the ongoing space battle, though there is a nearby external hatch. Outside, the hull is being raked and cooked by streaking energy beams and gouged by kinetic flak. Time for a stroll.
6	A pocket of the Argent Plague entered a ventilation shaft and has been scattered through a section of the ship. Now the walls and every inch of surface area is a disintegrating breeding ground for the swarm. Trying to pass directly through unprotected is asking for your mechs to be consumed.

COMBAT 0-U2:
99.9% OF GERMS

Sitrep: Demolition

Enemy Forces

For 3 PCs: 1x T1 **Mercenary Commander Bastion** (**Mercenary:** Favors Owed; **Commander:** Bolster Network; **Bastion:** Fearless Defender)
1x T1 **Assault**
1x T1 **Seeder** (Tripwires)
1x T1 **Aegis** (Adaptive Shielding)
2x T1 **Grunt Aegis**

For 4 PCs: Replace one **Grunt Aegis** with an untemplated **Aegis** with the **Adaptive Shielding** system.
Seeder: Add the **Elite** and **Spacer** templates and the **Concussion Gun** weapon from **Spacer.**

For 5 PCs: Replace one **Grunt Aegis** with an untemplated **Aegis** with the **Adaptive Shielding** system.
1x T1 **Hive** (Driving Swarm)

Reinforcements

For 3 PCs: 1x T1 **Assault**
1x T1 **Hive** (Driving Swarm)

For 4 PCs: +3x T1 **Grunt Aegis**

For 5 PCs: +1 T1 **Elite Spacer Seeder** (**Spacer:** Concussion Gun; **Seeder:** Tripwires)
Remove the **Assault** from the Reinforcements.

THE STAKES

As you approach the heart of the infection, the signs grow clearer. The bulkheads crawl with the Plague. It feasts on the ship's frame as it breeds a growing swarm. An alarm sounds in your mech with a mournful tone; a warning that a dusting of nanites is already dining on your chassis. Centuries ago, in the Vanishing Era, this alarm was a death sentence. Dusklight put an end to that.

But Dr. Lumen's light does not shine here, not while nullight intervenes.

The interlopers are in a storage bay. They shelter behind barrier shields, awaiting the Chekhov's demise. You approach, heavy mechanized footsteps sending ripples through the growing silver tide that threatens to swallow everything.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

The demolition objectives are the three nullight generators on the map. Check the sitrep to calculate each generator's **HP** and review the victory and defeat conditions.

DETAILS

The storage bay will soon be overrun by the Plague, along with the rest of the ship and its crew if the PCs don't act quickly.

Syndicate Bravo are hardened mercenaries and cold-blooded killers, but being surrounded by ever-gnawing, all-consuming death is enough to unsettle any veteran. This combined with being on the backfoot after the previous thrashing the PCs and Berke have been giving them has made them fearful and panicky. They may not be making rational decisions, especially as their numbers dwindle.

ARGENT PLAGUE

Several spaces on the map are marked as Plague zones. These areas are **dangerous terrain** (dealing **burn damage**). The zones expand as the Plague spreads. At the end of the first round, they grow to **Burst 1** around the zones**,** and the **Burst** increases by **1** at the end of each odd round (to **Burst 2** on round 3, **Burst 3** on round 5, etc.). Any object in a Plague zone takes **10 AP kinetic damage** at the end of each round (before the zone spreads).

The Plague will not spread through areas completely enclosed by barrier sphere shields created as **Burst** or **Blast** areas, such as the Aegis's **Defense Net** or the Napoleon's **Blink Shield.** However, the Plague zones will spread through **Line** barriers and other obstructions so long as it is physically possible to reach the area.

Additionally, if the barrier appears and covers spaces that are Plague zones, the spread is unaffected by that shield.

If the **Plague Spreading** clock was filled before this fight, the infection has already progressed significantly. Start each Plague zone at **Burst 2**.

CRANE ARMS

Throughout the map are mechanized crane arms for moving freight. The cranes are objects (**Size** 1, **HP** 10, **Evasion** 5, **E-Defense** 8). A hacker can seize control of them to throw nearby mechs. If a crane is hit with a **tech attack** the attacker chooses a target within **Range 3** of the Crane. The target can make a **Hull** save against the attacker's **Save Target** with **+2 Difficulty.** On a failure, the target is pulled to any space on the ground within **Range 5** of the Crane, ignoring obstructions along the way. Each crane can only be successfully hacked 1/round.

While the PCs can make great use of these crane arms to throw the Aegises away from the generators, the enemy can also use the crane arms to throw PCs out of their shields and into the Plague, or even throw an Aegis back into position. The nullight generators are bolted down and cannot be pushed or pulled.

DEPLOYMENT

Deploy the Aegises near each of the three generators and activate their **Defense Net** before the combat begins, making sure that the shield covers the generators. Ensure that the shields do not overlap with the Plague zones. Place each Aegis in reach of at least one crane for maximum fun value. Deploy all other enemy forces within the shields, spreading them out and utilizing cover as best as possible.

The PCs deploy in the **ADZ.**

TACTICS

The spreading Plague zones are an exponentially growing threat that will cover the room over the course of the combat. The Syndicate is intent on letting the Plague do the dirty work for them, so they'll take a defensive approach to this combat; the enemy forces won't willingly leave the Aegises' **Defense Net,** and will try to get back under a shield if they find themselves unprotected.

This fight may end very quickly if the PCs focus on aggressively bypassing defenses and taking down generators, or it might stretch out if the PCs play a game of attrition and control.

AEGIS

The Aegis is the lynch pin of the enemy's game plan. Without their **Defense Net,** the nullight generators will be easily destroyed by either the PCs or the spreading Plague zones. Protect them by deploying them in cover, if possible, and with the Bastion. The Aegises are very susceptible to being launched elsewhere by the crane arms, but their decent **Systems** also allow them to use the crane arms.

ASSAULT

Stay behind shields and in cover while firing at the PCs. Use the **Combat Knife** against any PCs that try to approach into melee range.

BASTION

The **Commander** of this group of Syndicate mercenaries. **Fearless Defender** is critical for the defense of Aegises, especially **Grunts** who must avoid damage at all costs. Move the Bastion to provide hard cover for any Aegis being focused. If the PCs approach, use **Heavy Assault Shield** to knock them back out of the shield, or even into Plague zones.

Save **Voice of Authority** to reroll bad saves on an Aegis or failed **checks** to avoid damage from Plague zones. Use **Favors Owed** when the PCs gather up, flavoring the artillery as a 'stray shot' from a gunner on a separate Union ship who is indebted to Syndicate Bravo.

HIVE
The Plague zones and the Seeder's mines provide many opportunities for the Hive to punish PCs with forced movement. Focus on keeping the PCs away from the generators and out from under the shields. The Hive's decent **Systems** make it fairly effective at hacking crane arms to reposition PCs.

SEEDER
Mines with **Tripwires** are fantastic for placing around the exterior of a **Defense Net.** It's recommended to pair up the Seeder with a non-**Grunt** Aegis in order to create a solid defensive perimeter around a generator. Use the **Grav-Grenade Launcher** to reposition PCs into mines and Plague zones. If it's available, the **Concussion Gun** is another fantastic tool for knocking PCs out from beneath shields and into danger.

OUTCOME
PC VICTORY
After the PCs succeed in destroying the nullight generators, dusklight fills and cleanses the *Chekhov*.

The swarming Argent Plague gnaws away at the bulkheads above and below you. Already the surface of your mech is teaming with lengthening silvery threads as nanite chains form. They begin to billow like metal flames. Then the final nullight generator dies and the world is painted yellow and orange. Dusklight pours from lamps across the ship, passing through any obstacle. It bathes you in its warm glow within your cockpit.

Where it shines, the Argent Plague withers away to nothing, becoming glittering black sand moments before it vanishes, though not without leaving its mark. Every surface it touched is traced with networks of scars and gouges.

The few surviving members of Syndicate Bravo surrender themselves to the PCs' mercy.

PC DEFEAT
The PCs have failed to destroy the generators in time. Fill the **Plague Spreading** clock if it wasn't already full. The section of the *Chekhov* they stand in is dissolving around them. The ship is already lost, and now they can only hope to save themselves. They must choose from the following:

- A single PC can heroically sacrifice themselves to destroy the remaining nullight generators. The few remaining operational dusklight lamps turn on, cleansing the Argent Plague and saving the lives of the remaining PCs.
- The PCs don't have much time to act before both mech and pilot are consumed by the Plague. Each PC can make two **risky checks** to either save themselves or save another. Determine the results of all rolls before describing the consequences in case one PC wants to save another that failed. On a roll of 9 or less, the PC is killed unless they are saved by another roll. On a roll of 19 or less, the PC rolls a d6, dying on a result of 3 or less unless they are saved by another roll. On a roll of 20 or more, the PC survives. If multiple people roll to save the same PC, the best outcome is used. Those who make checks to save other PCs and are not saved themselves automatically die.

The surviving members of Syndicate Bravo are extracted on stealthy shuttles and escape the battlefield.

MOVING ON
Regardless of how the battle went on the fore of the ship, Berke is able to destroy the aft nullight generators. Dusklight covers the rear of the ship. This ensures the survival of those on the command deck, including Torus and Bailey.

Outside, Commander Torus turns the tables on the Annorate naval group, shattering two ships and forcing the other ships to flee via blinkjump. The battle is won, though the state of Battlegroup Sirius depends on whether the PCs were able to disable the dataspike in time.

GM NOTE
If this is the GM's and/or your players' first time playing Lancer, you may wish to tone down and simplify all combats for this mission. If so, remove the enemy's optional systems (i.e. Adaptive Shielding, Driving Swarm, etc.), and consider removing any templates other than Grunt (Veteran, Elite, etc.).

MISSION OUTCOME

The outcome of this mission will depend heavily on the success of the PCs in racing the clock to remove the data spike and subsequently destroying the nullight generators. The following sections describe the circumstances depending on whether the battlegroup is whole or damaged, and if the *Chekhov* was cleansed of the Argent Plague or consumed by it.

If the **Gap Closed** clock was filled, Battlegroup Sirius was badly damaged. If the **Plague Spreading** clock was filled, the *Chekhov* was consumed past the point of repair.

Regardless of other outcomes, if the PCs were victorious in **Combat: 99.9% of Germs,** Berke will provide each PC with their choice of one of the following **Reserves: Ammo (+2)**, **Extra Repairs,** and **Redundant Repair.** These are supplies taken from the mercenaries destroyed in the battle.

BATTLEGROUP WHOLE, CHEKHOV CLEANSED

The best possible outcome. Battlegroup Sirius takes minimal overall damage thanks to the efforts of the PCs. Royce promises and eventually delivers medals and commendations from CentComm. Berke will also thank the PCs personally for saving the lives of many marines and noncombatants. Commander Torus provides the PCs with one **Core Battery** for every two PCs as thanks for their efforts.

BATTLEGROUP WHOLE, CHEKHOV CONSUMED

While the *Chekhov* suffered badly and is no longer operational, Battlegroup Sirius as a whole weathered the battle without taking strategically significant damage. Royce promises and eventually delivers medals and commendations from CentComm. Torus, Bailey, Royce, and Berke migrate to the *UNS-CV Kwai,* a clunky and outdated carrier.

BATTLEGROUP DAMAGED, CHEKHOV CLEANSED

Battlegroup Sirius has taken significant damage, having lost half its capital ships and the others having taken serious damage. Untick one segment of the **Union Strength** clock when it's created at the start of Act 1. Royce is disappointed with the PCs at first, then apologizes.

> **Royce:** *"This fiasco was not your responsibility. The fault lies with my leadership for letting it come to this, and the traitors within Union that disgraced themselves by ordering this farce. Mark my words, they will pay for it."*

If nothing else, at least the *Chekhov* remains operational as the Fleet's flagship.

BATTLEGROUP DAMAGED, CHEKHOV CONSUMED

The worst possible outcome. Little can be salvaged from Battlegroup Sirius. The survivors can barely limp to Gasherbrum Station on the few remaining crippled capital ships and the overcrowded escort vessels. Untick one segment of the **Union Strength** clock when it's created at the start of Act 1. Royce is angry with the PCs at first, then apologizes.

> **Royce:** *"This categorical disaster was not your responsibility. The blood is on my hands for my failures as a leader. I swear, the traitors responsible for this attack will pay for it."*

After reaching the station, Torus, Bailey, Royce, and Berke migrate to the *UNS-BB Sultana,* a deathtrap of a battleship. It will become an active detriment in **Mission: Forever War** in Act 3.

INVESTIGATION

The Union Naval Department will immediately begin an investigation into the circumstances around the attack on the *Chekhov*. They will begin tracking the funds that were used for paying Syndicate Bravo, a trail that will eventually lead back to Representative Oppani Nai's group of conspirators. However, this investigation will not bear fruit until Act 2, and Royce will come to his own conclusions in the meantime.

If the PCs are interested in tracking down the culprit, they may be able to follow the clues to Oppani. Even if he is captured and questioned, Oppani will deflect blame by saying he was approached about the plot by Coalitionists, so that Royce still has cause to attempt to dispose of Vodena in **Mission: Fall of Icarus.**

GASHERBRUM STATION

En route to the blink station, whatever remains of Battlegroup Sirius will reunite with the other seven battlegroups to form the 14th Fleet. Once regrouped, Royce will call together a digital meeting of the Commanders of every battlegroup in the fleet, plus Representative Vodena Park. The PCs will be called in by Royce to sit in the physical audience.

During the meeting, Royce will cover the following talking points:

- Royce will promote Commander Aleksey Torus to Admiral, to Torus's own surprise and the muffled consternation of the other Commanders. Royce commends Torus's swift recovery and retaliation after the twin blows of Admiral Payne's death and the attack on the *Chekhov*, saving what could be saved in the tragic situation and turning it around on the Annorum.
- If the PCs didn't achieve the worst outcome for this mission, their achievements will also be lauded by Royce.
- The meeting ends with Royce and Vodena having a short argument:
  - **Royce:** *"Beacon is a world of unlimited potential. We cannot allow it to fall into Empyrea hands at any cost, even if its potential must burn. Even if Beacon must burn."*
  - **Vodena:** *"Representative Merrick, that is insanity. We find a world clean of the Plague and your first thought is to destroy it? Just to spite the Annorum? No. We will pursue articles for a truce. You will not stain Beacon in blood for your vendetta."*
  - **Royce:** *"Indeed, I suppose my presence would be a problem for you. A shame your little gambit didn't work."*
  - **Vodena:** *Visibly confused, Vodena hesitates. "My what? You can't mean-"*
  - **Royce:** *"Meeting adjourned." Royce powers down the video channel and the screen goes black.*
- If asked about this last interaction, Royce will voice his suspicion that he has been a thorn in the side of Vodena and the Coalitionists. With him out of the way, their 'truce' (said with disgust) would give the Annorum the space and leverage they need to exploit Beacon to the fullest.

From here, refer to **Beat: Moths to Flame**.

BEAT 0-3:
MOTHS TO FLAME

Once the Prologue mission for their respective Path is complete, the PCs make their way to **Uinta/*Gasherbrum*** blink station. See the **On Blink Stations** section for a visual and functional description.

QUARANTINE

When the PCs arrive, they find ships clustered in mobs around the gate. It's a motley assortment of humanity that awaits the opening of Beacon's blink gate; eager colonists, desperate refugees, merchants, and more have traveled from across the galaxy to get in line.

Managing the crowd is the Church of the Flickering Flame, with the Farseers' blessing. The Church's purpose is to ensure that no trace of the Argent Plague passes through to Beacon. All ships planning to pass through the blink gate are subjected to a ship scan and multiple sweeps of dusklight. Passengers undergo a medical scan by Church templars to ensure no Plague nanites are hiding inside the body where dusklight cannot reach. The version and nanite count of their nanovaccine is also verified.

To achieve this, the Church has set up a quarantine zone for all arriving ships to keep them separate from the blink station and scanned ships already verified as clean. Only the verified ships will be allowed to proceed to Beacon through the blink gate. Any ships attempting to break the quarantine lines and reach the gate are destroyed by the ships of the Flickering Flame. Once through quarantine, ships are free to dock at the blink station and peruse its goods and services.

The **Annorum armada/*Union fleet*** arriving at the blink gate far outstrip the present forces of the Flickering Flame. After a bit of negotiating, the PCs' faction consents to the quarantine measures in order to keep the peace and to prevent the Plague from reaching Beacon in exchange for priority in the queue.

GRAND OPENING

After getting through quarantine and a few days spent waiting, the grand opening finally arrives. Each of the numerous blink gates across the galaxy will connect to Beacon one at a time to allow ships to pass. The Farseers mark the occasion with a broadcasted video message from Taro Baker, Chieftain of the Annamite Clan on Beacon.

> **Taro:** *"Greetings travelers. In a few minutes, the blink gate to Beacon shall be opened. Until then, you may pass the time by listening to this old man talk. Rarely do I get such a captive audience." The chieftain smirks.*
>
> *"For the past century, the Farseers of the Annamite Clan have been hard at work on construction of our station." He pauses, and the smirk fades to grim resignation. "We have sacrificed much along the way. It is true that the world is free from the Argent Plague, but that does not mean it is without danger."*
>
> *"If you were expecting a haven, a peaceful world without trials, then turn back here. There is no such place in this galaxy. But if you are seeking any port in the storm, then allow me to welcome you to Beacon." With a broad smile, the Chieftain spreads his arms wide.*
>
> *At that moment, power surges through the blink station. At its center, something dark glimmers, somehow blacker than the void of space. It expands, forming an inky wall of pitch black that spans the breadth of the central hole of the toroids. The blink gate stands open.*

The gate itself is shrouded in dusklight from large generators to sterilize ships one last time before passing through. As the blink gate opens, ships of all kinds press into dangerously close proximity, jockeying for better position. Some ships try to blow past quarantine and make a break for the blink gate, but are shot to fragments by the Church's ship batteries.

Then the PCs are passing through the gate and traveling hundreds of light years in an instant. This marks the end of the Prologue and the start of Act 1.

SECTION 3

ACT 1

ACT 1 DETAILS

STRENGTH CLOCKS

Start two clocks with eight segments, one named **Union Strength** and the other named **Annorum Strength,** each starting with **four segments ticked.** This may be reduced depending on the events of the Prologue. As events occur that empower or weaken each faction, these clocks might tick or untick their segments. These clocks will be used across all three Acts of the campaign.

Depending on the events of the campaign, both sides may come to a confrontation in Act 3. These clocks will be used to help determine the outcome of the battle, the difficulty of **Mission: Forever War,** as well as the effectiveness of each faction against the Revenants and the Argent Plague in Act 3.

INFLUENCE CLOCK

S**tart a clock with eight segments** with no segments ticked. This is the **Influence** clock with the name of the faction the PCs are aligned with; either **Annorum Influence** or **Union Influence.**

The **Influence** clock exists to measure the relationships the PCs and their faction have with other factions, and the potential favors it can call in. Keep track of each faction that contributes to the clock, so the PCs can determine whose help they can call upon later.

While this clock has specific use cases in Act 3, it can also be leveraged throughout the campaign by PCs as part of the **Power at a Cost** downtime action, which can be used during a mission. If the PCs are in a desperate situation, they may be able to call for aid from one of the factions they've previously assisted.

For example, if the PCs lose one or more of their mechs in a battle midway through a mission, they may be able to call for the swift emergency delivery of printed mechs. Alternatively, they may be able to untick one or more segments of a critical clock by calling for aid in a tough situation. When the PCs use **Power at a Cost** in this manner, untick one segment of the **Influence** clock.

RUMORS

During downtime or whenever appropriate during a mission, the PCs may hear rumors about locations, events, and odd sightings across Beacon. For example, in addition to pursuing their stated goal during **Gather Information** or **Get a Damn Drink** downtime actions, the PCs may also overhear gossip.

Use these rumors to foreshadow future events or flesh out various elements of Beacon. Some rumors are for specific Paths, or shouldn't be used after certain events, as noted.

ACT 1 RUMORS

Annorum Path: There was an attempted assassination of Union Representative Royce Merrick while en route to Beacon. Contracted killers boarded a Union ship and attempted to scuttle it with the Argent Plague.

Union Path: There was an attempted kidnapping of Princess Soleni, 5th in line to the Annorate throne. She and her disgraced brother, Prince Altair (3rd in line), are both on Beacon.

Beacon has a moon of sorts; an orbiting space station far away from the planet. Many have tried to board it, but none have yet succeeded.

(Before **Mission: Tilting at Windfalls)** The Pan-Concourse Holdings (PCH) Enterprise are advertising for Beacon's first mechanized gladiatorial event; they call it the 'Titanite Tilts'. The eponymous town, Tilt, features gambling, brothels, and a hundred other flavors of good times.

A native subaltern was seen entering a camouflaged elevator built into a stone cliff face. Explorers forced the doors open and descended the elevator shaft, never to be seen again.

The Church of the Flickering Flame have established Phospho, a city on the southern edge of Agraria, and have started bringing in shiploads of farmers and their equipment.

Pirates are preying on migrants and colonists, raiding their ships and towns, and stealing from vulnerable people in a world without a proper centralized security force.

Native subalterns keep barging into peoples' homes uninvited and performing maintenance on the utilities and fixing broken systems. There's talk of families going missing after such intrusions.

Two ships of explorers flew over the Stain. One ship dipped into the Distortion Zone. First they lost comms, then they lost control of the ship, and finally they crashed into the red sand. When the sandcloud settled, the second ship couldn't find any trace of the first, and didn't dare approach.

A group of Egregorians have made their way from New Hercynia to establish a hive on Beacon. They say they'll teach anyone who's curious and open-minded how to connect to Witness.

BEAT 1:
OPEN FOR BUSINESS

Emerging from the blink gate, the PCs' ship arrives lightly coated with blinkdust and into another dusklight field, the Flickering Flame's last measure to prevent the Plague from reaching Beacon.

The first thing newcomers notice is that they are surprisingly close to Beacon, viewing it from Live-Side. After a moment and some scans, it's revealed that it only seems that way because the planet is so massive. The second thing that they notice is that there's no star, nor any true planetary system. There is only Beacon, the blink station orbiting it, and ~~Artemis,~~ though the PCs won't notice the far-orbiting artificial moon at this point unless they make a point to scan for other sizable bodies.

The river of ships passing through the blink station is constant, thick, and one-way; it will continue for weeks unabated. Most people will end up taking up residence in the countless prefabricated housing units spread across the Live-Side. Beacon's exosphere will soon become a complicated jumble of orbiting ships as they try to work out the logistics of unloading people and supplies, or finding landing spots.

The situation is not helped by the dire straits some desperate travelers find themselves in, with ships haphazardly patched together or pushed past their limits. Tragic accidents of ships colliding or falling out of the sky are commonplace in these early days.

FARSEERS' BROCHURE

All travelers who arrive at Fansipan blink station receive a transmission of a 'guide' of sorts. The guide includes the following:

- A basic map of both Live-Side and Ops-Side, with the Farseers' naming scheme for regions and points of interest.
- A list of services that the Farseers can perform for exorbitant fees, including the translation of 'Spiritspeak', the language of those who previously inhabited Beacon, and assistance with locating ideal colony sites and prefabricated settlements.
- A warning:
  - ◊ *To harm the spirits, the native subalterns left behind by the world's previous inhabitants, is to risk the fury of the Revenants.*

ESTABLISHING A BASE

For the PCs, their first forays onto Beacon will be aimed at establishing a forward operating base on the planet. The events will depend on the Path:

ANNORUM PATH

Commander Ludov will order the Annorum armada into orbit around the planet. When the Union fleet's signals are picked up by sensors, Ludov will cautiously ensure that Beacon is constantly between the fleet and the armada.

He'll send out scouting parties to various regions of Beacon, including deploying the PCs under Galea Vebelle to investigate the islands that will be named the Aster Isles. On its largest island, they can scout out the Bio-Domes, Blush-Sand Bay, Clamshell Amphitheater, and the Under-Ferry.

The Aster Isles are reminiscent of the islands of Umara, the Karrakin water world, pre-Plague. Galea will instantly take a liking to this tropical paradise. With her recommendation, Ludov sets a course and begins establishing the Empyrean Bastion on Beacon. He names the largest island Bouquet, and takes it as the armada's headquarters.

Initially unsure of the safety of the prefabricated housing on the islands, more scouts are sent to scour the island for any sign of threat. In the meantime, impatient nobles, merchants, and soldiers wait on the edge of an apparent paradise. They spend this time atop escort ships floating offshore of each island, utilizing the exterior top-side of spaceships for recreation and sunbathing.

Eventually the all-clear is given, and there's a scramble for each noble house and family to find and claim the most idyllic homes and the most gorgeous vistas. If the PCs are not noble, they will be left with whatever quiet corners they can find, or be barracked with the rest of the ignoble soldiers. Still, even with the best spots taken, the tropical island has plenty of hidden grottos and quiet glades where printed homes may be built.

UNION PATH

After arriving and detecting the Annorum armada, Royce Merrick orders the Union fleet into battle positions. Admiral Torus contests this order, leading to a tense confrontation until Vodena Park remotely calls in to lend her weight against open warfare. Eventually, Royce agrees to avoid bloodshed… for now. The fleet and armada begin orbiting on opposite sides of the planet from each other.

Torus sends scouts to explore numerous locations on Beacon, and the PCs are sent with Berke to explore a promising prospect for a forward operating base. They can scout out the areas that will come to be called the Command Center and the Capital Hangars.

They might delve lightly into the Depths, but they'll be called back before they can get too deep. Past the first ten floors, they'll begin to lose signal, and Berke warns against going further.

The structure seems to either be a shipyard or a dock, and is deemed a suitable base of operations for the Union fleet. With Berke's recommendation, Royce gives orders to secure it and names it Fort Alma.

The early days of settling in bring an adjustment period. There's a fair amount of confusion and near collisions while experimenting with the zero gravity channels, and a lot of bewilderment about the many levels of the strange facility. The scouts that go deeper into the facility turn up hours or days later, haggard and hungry, while a couple of parties don't return at all. Only a few days after the fort is established, certain businesses start setting up shop (with Vodena's blessing) in an out-of-the-way spot on topside, setting the foundations for what will soon be called Dogtag Alley.

Unless the PCs plan on bunking with the rest of the marines in the barracks, they'll have to find their own accommodations. Do they move into the habitats built on the fort's roof, find rooms in seedy hotels in Dogtag Alley, or delve deeper into the fort for quiet wsolitude?

DOWNTIME 1

After arriving and establishing themselves on Beacon, the PCs may begin their first downtime. Having just undergone a difficult combat scenario, the PCs are rotated away from combat duty and are granted leave to rest, recuperate, and prepare for their next mission.

This period extends for several weeks, during which the PCs can take **two downtime actions.** See the **Downtime Actions** section for additional options over those found in the *Lancer Core Rulebook.*

During downtime, the following events occur. As with every future downtime, these events are optional; GMs may include them, briefly summarize them, or omit them as they desire, prioritizing the smooth flow and pacing of gameplay.

SHIP ASSIGNMENT

As with all dedicated mech pilot teams on Beacon, the PCs are issued a ship and a pilot if they do not already have either. See **The Ship** section for more details on using the ship in play, customizing the ship, and determining the pilot.

While the ship is primarily intended for active military missions, the PCs are authorized to use it during downtime for traveling across Beacon's great expanse, and even for R&R purposes. No one will raise a fuss if the PCs take their ship to go fishing in the Dexamen Sea, for example. However, the PCs are only issued one ship, and it's up to them to figure out how to split their time with it.

LICENSING PROCESS

With their new ship, the PCs are further authorized the funds to pursue resources and undertake training courses for the purpose of advancing their mech piloting skills and acquiring new equipment. Those who are choosing to license with the major manufacturers (IPS-N, SSC, and HA) are sent to Fengdu. Those who choose to tread down stranger paths and license with Horus, or allow certain pattern groups to find them, do so off-the-books.

The PCs can advance to LL1. Utilize the **Licensing** section for flavoring the licensing process.

VISITING FENGDU

Out of all the major settlements, Fengdu gets set up the fastest. Still, during their first licensing excursion, the PCs witness the commercial frenzy of the HIC in the city's early days. Vendors and merchants everywhere are squabbling over claims to prime real estate. Many stores are rushing to put up signs declaring dates for grand openings. The facilities for licensing are open, but bare-bones, with customer service being fronted by harried interns.

On their way around Fengdu, the PCs may run into a crowd staring at a native subaltern shuffling its way out of a building and into the forest.

Use the **Fengdu** section and the **Fengdu Sights** table to help flavor this visit.

PEACE TALKS

With tensions high between the Annorum armada and the Union fleet on Beacon, both sides begin negotiations over articles for a localized truce. The AUC (in concert with Anno Cyrus) and the UN (in concert with CentComm) work through their respective on-world representatives, Samuel Ludov and Vodena Park, to come to agreeable terms.

However, a complication arises during talks. The technology of Beacon, which is known to be capable of extraspatial and gravitational feats well beyond the each faction's experimental technology, is a top priority for retrieval and research. The Molten Sprawl region of Beacon has been discovered to be the manufacturing site for said technology. In order to obtain precious technical data and prevent their enemy from doing the same, the Annorum and Union engage in ground combat and skirmishes within the Sprawl.

The result is a stalemate and a heightening of the tensions, while negotiations for a truce begin to stall. Over the course of downtime, the deadlock continues and escalates, with neither side gaining the upper hand. The PCs are spared the grueling, attritional ground war in the hellish factory district for several weeks, until they are rotated back into active combat duty. This leads into **Mission: Fall of Icarus.**

During this time, Ludov and Vodena make an announcement to all personnel of their respective factions. The immediate response to these announcements is a mixed bag of cheering, relief, grumbling, and anger from the rank and file.

Annorum Path

Ludov: *"Nobles and ignobles, heed these words. The Anno, long may he reign, has decreed that our armada shall pursue articles for a truce on Beacon with our foe, Union.*

"The CentComm Representative, Vodena Park, has been…" Ludov grimaces, "...persuasive and persistent in establishing peace talks. However, not all factions within Union agree with this goal. Agitators may attempt to force our hand, to push us to overstep a boundary. Until the articles have been agreed upon and signed by both parties, our forces are to take measured steps and responses to Union hostility. We shall not be the aggressors, nor shall we roll over and play dead. Instead, we must be above reproach.

"Consider each of yourselves ambassadors. You represent the Annorum, our traditions, and our proud history. Carry yourselves with dignity, and carry your weapons with purpose."

UNION PATH

Vodena: *"Proud people of the Union, today I announce the beginning of negotiations between the Union Naval Department and the Annorate Unified Command. This effort has multipartisan support in the Central Committee. Soon we shall have articles for a truce between our two peoples on Beacon.*

"This momentous event may be the stepping stone to a more permanent armistice, to real, lasting peace, and an end to centuries of bloodshed! And yet, peace is a fragile thing," Vodena's expression turns somber. "It must be guarded from those who would shatter it.

"I know there are those among you who will reject my words and our peace. Remember, then, the oaths you swore to uphold the Utopian Pillars. In particular, the second Pillar: 'No Walls Shall Stand Between Worlds'. For too long the walls of war have stood between Union and the Annorum. I call upon you, brave marines, to build bridges instead of barricades! To show the galaxy the glory of humanity united once more!"

MISSION 1: FALL OF ICARUS

HUGO: "More tremors. They're really going at it up there."
YEVA: "And we're down here, missing out on all the fun."
HUGO: "I think I might miss the days when it was just us here, together. The clan, I mean. It was quieter, if nothing else. Almost peaceful."
YEVA: "Boring, you mean."

MISSION BEATS

- BEAT 1-1: FACTORY FEUD
  - COMBAT 1-1: EXTREME COMMUTING
- BEAT 1-2: SIREN SONG
  - COMBAT 1-2: DRAGON'S DEN
- BEAT 1-3: STRAY DOG STRUT
  - COMBAT 1-3: PRESSURE COOKER
- BEAT 1-4: MELTING WINGS
  - COMBAT 1-4: HAMMER AND ANVIL

CLOCKS

INFILTRATION

SPOTTED

PORT FOUND

BOMBS FALL

SIGNAL STOLEN (HIDDEN)

SUMMARY

The PCs are sent to a battleground in the Molten Sprawl to retrieve crucial technological data and break the stalemate between the Annorum and Union. They infiltrate a factory and plant a tracking virus in its systems, then survive the factory's inevitable destruction with crashfoam. They must then descend into the Undersprawl to locate the mainframe that holds production blueprints and technical specifications.

Once the PCs head beneath the surface for the datacenter, they encounter a group of Farseers under attack by predators. The PCs can choose to protect them or leave them to their fate. Depending on the timing of their arrival to the mainframe, they may reach it before or after the Mirrorsmoke mercenaries hired by the HIC. The mercs offer the PCs a deal to leave the mainframe to them, and if they don't accept, the encounter descends into violence.

Upon reaching the surface with the mainframe, the situation has evolved. An Annorum cruiser, the *AENS Gladiolus,* hovers overhead sending down shuttles loaded with troops and mechs to engage Union ground forces. The cruiser is struck by a distant capital ship, the *UNS-LS Antenora,* under Royce Merrick's orders. The *Antenora* is itself struck by beams from solar satellites and is forced to make an emergency blinkjump to escape.

The PCs must battle to escape the falling wreckage of the *Gladiolus* and reach safety before it impacts the ground. After being dug out the rubble, the PCs can hand off the data from the mainframe if they've recovered it.

CHARACTERS

BOTH PATHS:

- Royce Merrick
- Galea Vebelle
- Berke Rotterdam
- Yeva Kerov
- Hugo Navar
- Leslie Eyrios
- **Captain Oscar** (*he/him - ruthless, straightforward*): Captain of a squadron of the MSMC's Steelhounds.

Annorum Path:

- Altair Empyrea
- Samuel Ludov

Union Path:

- Aleksey Torus
- Emma Bailey

RECOMMENDED READING

- Annorum Empyrea
- Union: FourthComm
- Farseers
- Molten Sprawl (Hephaestus)
- Alloy River and Sea (Phlegethon)

PC UNINVOLVEMENT

If the PCs do not undertake this mission, treat this mission as a failure. See the **Mission Outcome** section for guidance.

THE SITUATION

Despite having only recently arrived on Beacon, the Annorum and Union are squaring up over the Molten Sprawl. They're not the only ones interested in the area.

UNION VS. ANNORUM

Beacon is a font of knowledge for certain unique technologies unknown to mankind. This includes advanced control of gravitational fields and extraspatial capabilities. The SSC proved this with their newer products, created using technology reluctantly traded from the Farseers, who have lived on Beacon for over a century.

While each faction can reverse-engineer samples of the technology, that will take time. Having the technical specifications and blueprints of these devices would allow them to skip years or decades of research. The same goes for the enemy. Whoever adapts these technologies first will have a definitive edge in war.

Both the Annorum and Union immediately set their sights on the factories which automatically produce much of Beacon's technological mysteries. Despite the seemingly endless number of factories, most are empty and silent, leaving only a few dozen operational. Each side attempts to study the same factories, while stopping the other side from doing the same.

As of yet, ship-to-ship combat has not occurred, since both sides are hashing out the terms of a truce during operations on Beacon. Vodena and Ludov are deep in negotiations with each other and each side's off-world military command (AUC for Annorum, UN for Union). The top strategists and commanders of the AUC and UN do not necessarily want to engage in full-on war, since that would likely lead to mutual destruction, with both sides unable to pursue their agenda on Beacon. In the worst case, Beacon itself might be damaged or destroyed.

The result is multiple battlegroups and naval groups hovering over the Sprawl in a standoff. Vodena and Ludov each reside in their own capital ships, restlessly circling each other as they hammer out the finer details of a truce. Royce has been hamstrung in his desire for direct and immediate conflict by CentComm's priorities and directives, but he has been escalating the pressure and the stakes on the ground.

Beneath the hovering ships, each sides' mechanized and infantry forces clash for territory. Any time one side gets the upper hand and moves in to investigate, the factory being studied gets bombarded by ship artillery after a broadcasted warning of intent. This has led to a stalemate that has stretched for two weeks. Both sides are forced to maintain a fortified perimeter around the active factories while the battlegroups above observe their movements.

From the Annorum, Altair and Galea are making their marks on the battlefield. From Union, Berke wreaks devastation across multiple skirmishes.

BREAKING THE STALEMATE

The PCs' faction is attempting to break this stalemate using the technology of the Farseers. They intend to send the PCs in with the SIREN virus to infect a factory's network. In order to survive the effort, they'll need the crashfoam ejector.

SIREN VIRUS

The SIREN virus was developed by the Farseers for the purpose of tracking down interconnected equipment on Idaean networks, using the native coding language. Once uploaded, the virus causes systems linked to the original upload point to create electronic signals that can be physically tracked down. Some unknown security mechanism prevents the virus from spreading into the core systems that manage Beacon, but it functions as expected on distant utilities, like those found in the Molten Sprawl.

HANDHELD TRACKER

This device directs the user toward systems infected with the SIREN virus. It is capable of distinguishing between signals and filtering secondary and tertiary targets as the virus spreads. In this use-case, the virus infects the factory control unit (FCU), then infects the mainframe as a secondary target, which then spreads the virus to other FCUs as tertiary targets. While signals and long-range comms, including omninet communications, can't normally be sent or received in the underground spaces of Beacon, Farseer technology is capable of doing so, allowing the tracker to trace the mainframe underground.

CRASHFOAM EJECTOR

This device was originally designed for emergencies aboard starships, but it has been modified to be maneuverable by a mech. The ejector, when activated, explodes into an expanding sphere of protective, hardened foam. The foam disperses kinetic energy, and heavy impacts and weight only make the foam firm up faster. The people and mechs inside the foam will likely end up buried and helpless with a layer of rubble over top until a search and rescue team can excavate them.

HIC'S PLANS

While Union and the Annorum take center stage in this conflict, the HIC is working to undercut both behind the scenes. Every corporation wants the technology for themselves, and so the HIC has been making under-the-table deals.

Naomi Grenyr of the SSC struck a bargain with Hugo Navar to provide the Farseers with an immediate supply of medicine for alpinist syndrome. After over a century of living isolated on Beacon, their supplies have dwindled nearly to nothing, even with strict (and sometimes fatal) rationing. Hugo feared that Yeva's worsening condition might kill her, so he went behind his chieftain's back to make the trade and had the medicine anonymously delivered.

In exchange, the Farseers gave the HIC the same tracking technology that they sold to the PCs' faction, along with communications technology that will allow communications between the underground and the surface. Once the PCs have uploaded the virus, the deniable assets of the Mirrorsmoke Mercenary Company (MSMC) 414th Detachment, AKA the 'Steelhounds' on site will begin moving toward the mainframe, attempting to steal it from under the PCs' noses.

UNVEILING THE SCHEME

If at any point the PCs determine that the HIC is behind the deployment of the MSMC's Steelhounds, they may be able to provide that information to the leaders of their faction. The diplomats of the their faction will be more than happy to leverage evidence of the HICs' criminal activity in active battlefields at the negotiation table. The result is bargains for several major contracts made at the HICs' expense.

For uncovering this scheme, the PCs are each rewarded **Reserves** of their choice. If the PCs approach any HIC delegate to speak about the matter, the delegate won't talk about it openly. If Chieftain Baker discovers that Hugo made the secret trade for medicine, he will initially be furious, though he will eventually come around to understand, though not agree with, Hugo's reasoning.

Objectives:	Infect the factory control unit with the SIREN virus, then track down the signal to the mainframe. Retrieve the mainframe or its data and return to the surface for extraction.
Parameters:	The PCs will be issued a drive with the SIREN virus and an appropriate cable. If they infect the system, they are given a handheld tracker for chasing down the signal. They are also issued a Size 1 crashfoam ejector to carry with them into the factory. Once the PCs are beneath the surface of the Sprawl, they'll no longer be able to communicate with the surface.
Stakes:	Their faction risks falling behind in the race to acquire Beacon's unique technologies, ceding the first breakthroughs to the enemy.
Reward:	The PCs will advance to LL 2. Mission success will tick up the PC's faction's **Strength** clock.

BRIEFING

After having the chance to get settled, to rest and recover from their recent heroics, the PCs are called in for a group briefing in an audience hall filled with a dozen other mech pilot teams. The first briefer is **Ludov**/***Aleksey.*** A second briefer, **Altair**/***Berke*** stands in for the PCs' individual briefing.

The first briefer will summarize the situation of the confrontation between the Annorum and Union over the Molten Sprawl. Use **The Situation** section for reference, with these recommended talking points:

- Advanced technology of Beacon, gravity and extraspatial control.
- Technical specifications from factories in the Molten Sprawl.
- Battlegroups in standoff over Sprawl while the truce is in works.
- Attempts to study factories are thwarted, leading to stalemate for two weeks.
- The PCs can ask questions for more information and clarification.
- The stalemate must be broken. Each team will be given their individual tasks.

The meeting is broken up as various teams are given jobs to be in tactical and supporting positions. Multiple teams are going to be attempting the SIREN virus strategy across the battlefield. At this point, **Altair/ *Berke*** will pull the PCs into a side room and get into the brass tacks of the plan with the following talking points:

- To break the stalemate, **Operation Pillowtalk** has the PCs being sent into the Sprawl with new tools:
  - ◊ The SIREN virus.
  - ◊ A handheld tracker.
  - ◊ The crashfoam ejector.
- The PCs and the ejector will land at some distance from the target factory and approach by ground, avoiding notice if possible. The PCs will have to break cover at the perimeter of the factory and fight their way inside as quickly as possible.
- The Enemy's capital ships above are focused on monitoring our forces surrounding other active factories, and are less focused on their own forces.
- The PCs are to meet up with an allied infantry team near the targeted factory. The team will deploy a comms jammer to buy time before the ship notices the PCs.
- The PCs must reach the factory control unit (FCU) and start the upload of the SIREN virus, purchased from the Farseers, which infects Beacon's machines.
- The PCs can use the crashfoam to protect the FCU and themselves from bombardment during the upload. If the FCU is destroyed prior to completion of the virus upload, the link to the mainframe will die with it.
- Once the mainframe that oversees the factories is infected, the PCs can track down the signal and extract the mainframe or its data.

GUIDE

Since this is a multi-step process and may be complicated to parse, here's a basic step-by-step guide for the players and the GM.

1. Insertion into the combat zone behind enemy lines.
2. Sneak into position, meet the infantry with the jammer, then jam enemy comms.
3. Rush past the defenders into the factory with the crashfoam ejector in tow.
4. Find the factory control unit (FCU) and implant the SIREN virus.
5. If necessary, use the crashfoam injector to protect both yourselves and the FCU from orbital bombardment as the virus uploads.
6. The virus spreads from the FCU to the mainframe once the upload is complete.
7. Use the handheld scanner to seek out the now infected mainframe.
8. Retrieve the mainframe or its data and return to the surface for extraction.

BEAT 1-1: FACTORY FEUD

TACTICAL INSERTION

The PCs are deployed into the Molten Sprawl from their ship with drop pods.

As the ship approaches, the sand first gives way to heaped masses of debris and junk, then an ocean of brown and gray buildings broken up by a glowing grid of fire. This is the Molten Sprawl. In the space above it, capital ships and their escorts face off in a cold war, circling the active battlefield below like vultures.

Then the ship descends into atmosphere. Lower, lower, until you can practically feel the underside of the ship being scorched by the white-hot, eye-searing canals. The pilot begins a countdown. Three, two, one--your gut lurches as you enter freefall briefly before the impact of metal against concrete.

The drop pod shatters apart and you find yourself between colossal, silent factories. Above, the ship continues on towards the basecamp as if nothing happened.

The distant echoing cracks of munitions help you orient yourself toward your objective. Initiating Operation Pillowtalk.

The PCs have landed in the Molten Sprawl and must travel the rest of the way to the targeted factory. See the **Molten Sprawl** section for a description of the area and the **Molten Sprawl Sights** table for ideas on flavoring the mission. The PCs will have to avoid the attention of sentries, drone patrols, and the scanning systems of the capital ships above. They must also drag the heavy crashfoam ejector along with them.

CLOCKS

Start two racing clocks: a four-segment goal clock called 'Infiltration' and a four-segment threat clock called 'Spotted'.

Tick the **Infiltration** clock whenever the PCs overcome an obstacle with successful **checks** and make progress toward the factory. Tick the **Spotted** clock whenever the PCs face consequences for failed **checks** that draw attention or raise suspicion.

If the **Infiltration** clock fills first, the PCs will have a chance to meet the friendly infantry team in position near the Enemy's perimeter. They'll wait on the PCs to give the command before activating the jammer and preventing the nearby Enemy from alerting the ships above.

If the **Spotted** clock fills first, the Enemy will become alerted to their presence and call in reinforcements. With their cover blown, there's no point in jamming communications. The PCs' best bet is to bumrush the Enemy and reach the factory, then hope the crashfoam will keep them safe from an early bombardment.

Use the **Sprawl Stealth Obstacles** table to describe obstacles along the journey that must be overcome with **checks.**

Once the PCs are in position near the designated factory, they can make out the perimeter of the Enemy's defenses, standing at a fair distance from the building to avoid it being targeted for bombardment. An active factory looms beyond the Enemy, around 200 meters tall. Irregular glowing light seeps from the wide open door. The only way in is through the forces ahead. When the PCs charge in with the crashfoam ejector, proceed to **Combat: Extreme Commuting.**

SPRAWL STEALTH OBSTACLES

ROLL 1D6	
1	Crossing one sector of the factories, the PCs see the results of collateral damage on factories from previous battles. They come to a bridge across a wide canal, the only one in sight. Half-buried in the center of the bridge is an unexploded artillery shell. Great cracks spiderweb out from it, making the bridge shift when weight is put on it.
2	The sound of rubble crunching alerts the PCs to a patrol. Ahead, two Enemy mechs stride between crumbling factories. The pair of bored sentries keep watch over a broad stretch of nothing. At least, they hope it's nothing.
3	The PCs' mechs give them a warning, a wide area sweep-scan is passing over them. One of the capital ships in the sky is keeping watch over the periphery of the battlefield. The PCs can take cover, foil the scan, or create a distraction, but they'd better do it quickly.
4	Moving through a tight alley or the inside of a factory shell, the PCs suddenly come face to face with people. These heavily-garbed, illegal scavengers from Tilt are lurking around the edges of the battlefield hoping to grab anything of value from fallen bodies and wrecks. They're armed and extremely anxious about being caught. Things might go sideways fast if someone says the wrong thing.
5	A glint of metal flitting into an alley catches the attention of a PC. There are metal drones smaller than a person that are flying low around the area. They'll report back to homebase with anything they see.
6	An especially damaged section of the factories is difficult to navigate due to stacks of fallen rubble blocking every intersection. To make matters worse, the PCs' passive environmental scanner is indicating active circuitry buried beneath the shattered concrete around them. It might just be factory equipment, or the whole area might be a minefield.

COMBAT 1-1:
EXTREME COMMUTING

ANNORUM PATH

Sitrep: Escort

Enemy Forces

For 3 PCs: 1x T1 **Commander Breacher** (**Commander:** Military Discipline)
1x T1 **Specialist Barricade** (**Specialist:** Martial Artist; **Barricade:** Titan-Snare Drone)
1x T1 **Sniper**
1x T1 **Sentinel** (Punisher Ammunition)

For 4 PCs: +1x T1 **Support** (Remote Reboot)
Sentinel: Add the **Veteran** template (+Agility) and **Insulated** trait.

For 5 PCs: +1x T1 **Sniper**
Sentinel: Add the **Elite** template and **Rapid Response** trait.

Reinforcements

For 3 PCs: 1x T1 **Specialist Barricade** (**Specialist:** Martial Artist; **Barricade:** Titan-Snare Drone)
1x T1 **Support** (Remote Reboot)
1x T1 **Sniper**
1x T1 **Sentinel** (Punisher Ammunition)

For 4 PCs: +1x T1 **Support** (Remote Reboot)
Sentinel: Add the **Veteran** template (+Agility) and **Insulated** trait.

For 5 PCs: +1x T1 **Sniper**
Sentinel: Add the **Elite** template and **Rapid Response** system.

UNION PATH

Sitrep: Escort

Enemy Forces

For 3 PCs: 1x T1 **Commander Cataphract** (**Commander:** Military Discipline)
1x T1 **Specialist Barricade** (**Specialist:** Martial Artist; **Barricade:** Titan-Snare Drone)
1x T1 **Rainmaker**
1x T1 **Duelist** (Boast)

For 4 PCs: +1x T1 **Mirage**
Duelist: Add the **Veteran** template (+Agility) and **Insulated** trait.

For 5 PCs: +1x T1 **Rainmaker**
Duelist: Add the **Elite** template and **Face Me!** system.

Reinforcements

For 3 PCs: 1x T1 **Specialist Barricade** (**Specialist:** Martial Artist; **Barricade:** Titan-Snare Drone)
1x T1 **Mirage**
1x T1 **Rainmaker**
1x T1 **Duelist** (Boast)

For 4 PCs: +1x T1 **Mirage**
Duelist: Add the **Veteran** template (+Agility) and **Insulated** trait.

For 5 PCs: +1x T1 **Rainmaker**
Duelist: Add the **Elite** template and **Face Me!** system.

THE STAKES

The PCs must reach the active factory in a timely fashion with the crashfoam ejector in tow. If they cannot, they risk either being flattened when the factory is bombarded, or being forced to abandon the mission in its early stages.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

See the rules for Escort (*Lancer Core Rulebook* pg 269). The crashfoam ejector is a **Size 1 Objective.** Enemy forces are interested in the crashfoam ejector, an unfamiliar object and a new tactic, and intend to capture it. They won't risk damaging it by attacking it.

DETAILS

While long-distance communications may be jammed, short-range comms are still functional, allowing the PCs to speak to (or trashtalk) the Enemy, and the Enemy to respond in kind. The bitter, lukewarm war between both sides has engendered rivalry and hostility, and the GM can channel that by calling out the cowardly ambush, especially if the PCs failed to stay hidden.

The Enemy mechs are scarred and gouged from the combative stalemate, and their pilots exhausted from vigilance and the hellish environs; they're not at their best.

If the **Infiltration** clock was filled, this battle occurs as normal. If the **Spotted** clock was filled, choose **1** (3 players) or **2** (4-5 players) NPCs from the set of Reinforcements to deploy into the battle in the first round. This represents the forces the Enemy was able to call in ahead of the PCs' attack when their cover was blown.

The battlefield is streaked with canals of molten metal. Pipes vent exhaust fumes and obscure the battlefield, granting soft cover. Czech hedgehogs and mines are placed to deter passage.

MOLTEN METAL

The canals of molten metal present throughout the Molten Sprawl threaten to melt down anyone that falls into them. Molten metal areas are **difficult terrain** that is **one space deeper** than the bridges and canal walls around them. A character that enters the molten metal's space or ends their turn in it takes **3 burn** and **2 heat.** Objects in the molten metal take **10 AP energy damage** at the end of each round.

MINES

Any character that enters a mine's space causes it to detonate in a **Blast 1** explosion. Characters in the area must succeed on an **Agility** save or take **5 explosive damage.** On a success, they take **half damage.** Characters entering a mine's space on their turn can disable it by succeeding on a **Systems** check as a **quick action**. However, on a failure, the mine detonates. Once triggered, the mine is destroyed.

DEPLOYMENT

Deploy the enemy forces by spreading them out on either of the central two platforms, placing artillery further away from the PCs.

The PCs deploy in the **ADZ.**

TACTICS

The Enemy isn't sure what the PCs' goal is, but until comms are restored, their standing orders are clear. They must stop them from reaching the active factory. They will also attempt to seize the ejector, which they cannot immediately identify.

The NPCs present in this combat will differ depending on the PCs' Path, but the Barricade will be present for both Paths.

BARRICADE

The primary force for preventing the PCs from crossing the battlefield. Use **Mobile Printer** and the **Titan-Snare Drone** to block off bridges as PCs approach them. With assistance from **Martial Artist,** use **Grapple** to pull PCs away from the **Objective,** or **Ram** to knock them into the canals.

Annorum Path

BREACHER

Use the large threat on the **Dual Shotguns** to lockdown movement. The Sentinel works at a similar range, and may benefit from **Military Discipline. Breach Ram** may be a 'fun' way to knock the enemy into the canals.

SENTINEL

Focus on deterring PC movement to prevent them from moving the **Objective. Eye of Midnight** can lock down an entire group of PCs on the tight confines of the bridges. Depending on the number of players, the Sentinel may use **Insulated** to cross the molten canals while ignoring the **burn,** though they won't negate the **heat.**

SNIPER

Force the PCs to either take it slow behind cover while trading shots, or charge across the battlefield to deal with the Sniper. Use **Defensive Grapple** to escape melee PCs by crossing the canals or latching high on the walls of the factory to the east.

SUPPORT

Clear **burn** from allies if they fall in the canals or slow down PCs with the **Sealant Gun.** The Support's large size can make for a good blocker. Even its wreck can contribute by blocking a bridge.

UNION PATH

CATAPHRACT

The Cataphract cuts through the messy battlefield with its high mobility, reaching its allies to grant the benefits of **Military Discipline,** especially to the Duelist. Careful usage of **Impale** may be able to knock PCs into the canals.

DUELIST

Challenge the cowardly ambushers, especially those that threaten your more delicate allies. Insult their pathetic flailing with **Boast.** Use **Deflect** to reduce the damage against them and stay mobile. Depending on the number of players, the Sentinel may use **Insulated** to cross the molten canals while ignoring the **burn,** though they won't negate the **heat.**

MIRAGE

Use **Dataveil** on the frontline Duelists and Cataphract to begin with, but consider switching to the fragile Rainmakers if they are threatened. Move your allies around the canals to safer spots with **Glitch Scanners** and **Blip.** Above all, don't expose the Mirage.

RAINMAKER

Stay behind cover and make it rain. Use **Javelin Rockets** to help the Barricade block off bridges.

OUTCOME

PC VICTORY

Pressing forward through the rush of incoming Enemy mechs, the PCs successfully reach the factory door with the crashfoam ejector. Their foes quickly give up pursuit, not wanting to be inside when the bombs fall.

PC DEFEAT

Unable to drag the ejector across the intervening canals due to Enemy intervention, the PCs must make a choice: turn back and abandon the attempt or risk proceeding into the factory without the crashfoam ejector. If they choose the former, refer to the **Failing the Upload** section.

BEAT 1-2: CRASH COURSE

One way or another, the PCs have entered the factory, though they may not have the crashfoam ejector and, depending on the success of the infiltration, they may not have much time before the bombs start falling. They won't be able to **rest** until they're somewhere secure, and the factory is anything but safe.

CLOCKS

Start two racing clocks: a four-segment goal clock named 'Port Found' and a four-segment threat clock named 'Bombs Fall'. If the PCs previously filled the **Spotted** clock, start the **Bombs Fall** clock with two segments already ticked.

Tick the **Port Found** clock whenever the PCs overcome an obstacle and progress toward locating the FCU via **checks.** Tick the **Bombs Fall** clock whenever the PCs receive consequences from **checks** that would delay them.

Use the **Factory Obstacles** table to help describe the hurdles the PCs must bypass while frantically searching for the FCU.

Once the **Port Found** clock is filled, the PCs find the FCU.

FACTORY OBSTACLES

ROLL 1D6

1	The factory floor is strewn with a maze of conveyor belts moving heavy metal parts at intense speed. Stepping on one can throw you off balance and have you tumbling down dark chutes and around tight corners. Still, if a PC can figure out how to navigate them, there's no faster way around the factory.
2	A row of massive pots of molten metal hang from chains. Chutes drop chunks of slag into the pots for melting. The pots might be scaled to allow for a high vantage point for surveying the factory, but tilting them one way or the other will cause molten slag to spill.
3	Mounds of glowing metal pass through a tight gap into a larger chamber. The roof of the gap is lined with giant pistons larger than a mech which hammer down and flatten the mounds on each side. The chamber beyond looks promising, but explorers must first bypass the pistons without getting flattened.
4	At the end of a long maze of hallways is a room lined with chutes on the walls. They drop defective metal products and parts into a series of heavy rotary grinders that line the room's floor; the blades blur as they rend and tear anything that gets caught in them. Above the grinder is a meshwork of bars that might be swung across to a hall on the other side. The factory was clearly not built with pedestrian safety in mind.
5	In a quiet, dark section of the factory, a PC's utility lights illuminate movement. A slow conveyor belt drags the torsos of subalterns along as mechanical arms plug limbs into sockets and screw panels into place. If care is not taken, a PC's mech may gain a few extra sets of appendages.
6	A misplaced foot or a turning conveyor belt has a PC tumbling down into a pit, thankfully landing into something soft. A grey, powdery material is slowly filling the pit from chutes. A pipe in the center is dumping water into the center, and paddles are about to start mixing everything into a slurry. Ideally, the PC won't be baked into whatever industrial cake this machine is making.

FACTORY BOMBING

When the **Bombs Fall** clock is half full (two segments), the PCs receive the following broadcasted text message over the AllComm channel from the Enemy:

>//ALERT_WARNING_NOTIFICATION::: DESIGNATED THEATER ZONE LOC: 18.35633809847 -97.61868430371+++INCOMING ORDNANCE_[300 SECONDS]+++EVAC ORDER ISSUED+++YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED

When the **Bombs Fall** clock is full, capital ships begin raining down 'light' artillery fire, not their main cannons, which are weapons of mass destruction. The ceiling buckles in as shells rain from the sky and begin to flatten the building.

If the PCs have not yet filled the **Port Found** clock, the group can collectively decide whether to continue the search as the bombardment commences.

If they continue the search, future **checks** become **risky,** and every consequence causes their mech to take **1 structure damage.** If a pilot is not in their mech, they are instead reduced to **0 HP.** If a **Down and Out** pilot is not removed from the facility or sheltered by crashfoam, they will die.

FACTORY CONTROL UNIT (FCU)

The FCU is a relatively small device hooked up to dozens of network cables. The PCs can attach their issued drive to begin uploading the virus. Afterward, they can either wait for the upload to complete, ticking the **Bombs Fall** clock twice, or a tech-savvy PC can attempt to speed up the transfer with a **difficult, risky check**, made challenging by the unfamiliar technology and coding language.

If the PCs have the crashfoam ejector, they can deploy it at any time to protect themselves from the effects of the bombardment, but they will become stuck in the foam. Once the **Port Found** clock is full, the PCs can use crashfoam to protect the FCU until the upload is complete. If the PCs complete the upload without using the crashfoam ejector, then a single succesful **check** allows them to exit the factory.

If the PCs attempt to leave the FCU unprotected while the program uploads and the **Bombs Fall** clock completes, the FCU is destroyed before it can upload. Instead, even without crashfoam, a PC can risk damage during the bombardment to protect the FCU while the upload completes.

Pulling the activation cord on the crashfoam ejector, you are surprised to feel it snap. You hold the mech-sized handle and stare at the dangling, ragged end of the cable for a long moment as death descends toward you. You wonder for a moment if it's broken.

Pop! There is a flash of white across all your visual displays, then they go dark. The hiss of fizzy, bubbling noise eventually settles. Your mech can't move, hemmed in by cushions on every side. There's soft, distant thuds above you that you distantly register as debris falling onto the foam.

FAILING THE UPLOAD

If the PCs are unsuccessful in entering the factory and uploading the virus, an alternative means of completing the mission will have to be determined or Operation Pillowtalk will end in failure. If the PCs admit defeat, proceed to the **Mission Outcome** section. Otherwise, attempts for alternative routes can be handled narratively with clocks.

Some possible options include:

- Navigating the complicated Undersprawl to burrow up into an active factory from below, though subterranean scanners are watching for this. It may be difficult, but this is a viable means of reaching an FCU and uploading the virus.
- Asking around, the PCs learn of a group of Farseers acknowledged as non-combatants who have descended into the Undersprawl. **Altair/** ***Vodena*** will suggest asking them for assistance. Proceed to **Beat: Siren Song** with the intent of tracking down the Farseers instead of following the virus signal. If the PCs rescue their clanfolk during **Combat: Dragon's Den,** Hugo may share with them the location of the mainframe.
- Unidentified nuclear reactor signals, signs of unknown mechs illegally on the battlefield, are picked up by ship scans and mentioned over radio chatter. The signals disappear, likely marking their descent into the Undersprawl. Proceed to **Beat: Siren Song** with the intent of tracking down the mysterious mechs (the Steelhounds) instead of following the virus signal. The Steelhounds will end up trailing the PCs instead if they can successfully learn the location of the mainframe from the Farseers.

BEAT 1-3:
SIREN SONG

If the PCs deployed the crashfoam ejector, then they are trapped in place. They can attempt **heroic checks** to extricate themselves from the foam more quickly, or just wait for the rescue team led by **Galea/*Berke.*** If the PCs didn't use the ejector, they can exit the factory as it falls to artillery fire.

If the PCs were successful in uploading the virus, then **Galea/*Berke*** will confirm that Phase 1 of Operation Pillowtalk is complete. Phase 2 consists of tracking down the signal with the Farseer handheld scanner.

The signal is coming from beneath the surface, and so the PCs need to descend a ramp into the Undersprawl. There, they must retrieve the signal's source, the mainframe (or the data on it), and return to the surface via the same route for extraction. **Galea/*Berke*** and the elites of their forces must stay on the surface, since their absence would be noted as suspicious by the Enemy.

THE DESCENT

Start a clock named Signal Stolen with eight segments and keep it hidden from the players.

If the PCs deployed the crashfoam ejector and didn't escape it early, start this clock with two segments ticked. If the clock is filled before the PCs reach the mainframe, the Mirrorsmoke mercs reach it first and complicate the situation in **Combat: Pressure Cooker.** Otherwise, the PCs reach the mainframe first.

To get there, they will have to cross the Undersprawl, a suffocating industrial maze, and reach the deepest layer. See the **Undersprawl** section for a description of the area. Traversing this space will be difficult, requiring **checks** to overcome problems from the **Undersprawl Obstacles** table. The only guidance the PCs have is the handheld scanner, which directs them to go deeper.

The PCs don't know they're in a race against another force. Tick the **Signal Stolen** clock whenever the PCs are delayed by consequences from **checks** and when they **rest.** Inform the PCs when you tick it (even if the clock is already filled), but don't show them the clock, nor tell them what it is for.

When the PCs have overcome four obstacles from the **Undersprawl Obstacles** table, they receive a distress call.

FARSEERS IN DISTRESS

Over the AllComms channel comes a desperate woman's voice, though the comms are badly distorted by the signal-blocking walls. While the Farseers have technology that allows their communications to bypass the blockage, the PCs do not have the appropriate receivers. The result is a staticky, broken-up, though recognizable distress call:

"Thi--Hephaestus Group Four requesting imm--assistance! We've pissed off a nest of forgemouths--". Static interrupts the transmission for a few seconds before a gurgling roar breaks the quiet and rattles the interior of your cockpit. "Hello? Can any--hear this?! Captain Yeva? Please, we--eaten alive down here!"

The message is accompanied by muffled rattling that your mech identifies as automatic small arms gunfire in near proximity. Down one hallway, in the direction of the battle you can just make out a black scaled tail curling around the corner, a hunter closing in on prey.

The PCs have a decision to make: keep moving toward the mainframe, or aid the Farseers' explorers.

If they choose the former, there are a few more desperate cries for help, diminishing as each side grows more distant. Then there is only conspicuous silence. Leslie Eyrios dies with the other explorers, eaten by the forgemouths. The PCs must overcome two obstacles from the **Undersprawl Obstacles** table before they reach the deepest layer and the mainframe. Skip to **Beat: Stray Dog Strut.**

If the PCs move in to help the Farseers, proceed to the next section.

UNDERSPRAWL OBSTACLES

ROLL 1D20

1-2	Moving down one hallway, there is a buzz, followed by muffled clanking as machinery springs to life. The walls seem to shift. It takes a moment for the PCs to realize that the walls aren't moving; instead the conveyor belt that composes the floor has begun dragging the PCs down hallways and around corners, potentially separating them or veering them off course. Large, heavy pieces of machinery fill corridors on their way to a nearby surface factory, soon to become active.
3-4	A seismic wave rolls through the Undersprawl, causing tremors that can be felt in the cockpit. Above, an ammo dump has just been struck and exploded, cratering the surface. After a moment of quiet, a low hum builds into a shrieking whine. The walls and pipes buckle and rupture inward around the PCs, pouring molten metal, corrosive chemicals, and hissing, superheated steam into their vicinity. They need to move - and fast.
5-6	Coming to a quiet, unlit area, the PCs stumble across a freight elevator. The device is dead, and the floor buttons with the unfamiliar writing do nothing. Seems the power for this sector is out, and needs to be restored if the elevator is to function again. Alternatively, the elevator shaft itself could also be used to reach lower levels. However, the dangerous shaft clearly wasn't designed for climbing, and it's a long fall if anything goes wrong.
7-8	The air in this section of the underground is very still. The black lichen on the walls has wilted away to show the white stone beneath. The passive environmental scanner pops up with a temperature warning; this space is hot as hell, and getting warmer by the moment. A secondary warning notifies the pilot that their reactor's cooling and the cockpit's air conditioning systems are being overwhelmed.
9-10	Lost in the midst of tangled underground factories, utility corridors, and endless loopbacks, the PCs arrive at a large octagonal room. On the floor in the center of the room is an intricate mural of multicolored lines and paths. On closer examination, it appears to be a map, though the language of the writing (Idish) can't be translated by their systems. With careful study, someone might be able to chart a path to the lower levels.
11-12	The tunnel suddenly ends in collapse, a place where white rock debris sits in a pile against crumbled stone. Turning back and finding a different route is a lengthy process. Alternatively, a vertical conveyor belt with hooks carries parts into the black depths kilometers below. Trying to ride it down is a precarious, but swift route to the lower levels. Perhaps even more dangerous is descending deeper than intended, ~~all the way down to Hermes.~~
13-14	The PCs have been traveling for many hours, and hunger and the need to rest creep up on them. While prepping MREs in a safe spot, a gang of bipedal, scaled mole-rats steal the PCs' rations. They try to escape into the complex, whirling guts of the cogworks, which are too tight a fit for mechs to traverse. If they don't get their food back, the PCs will go hungry, making future narrative **checks** more difficult.
15-16	Approaching a particularly charged area, the PCs' mechs send warnings of a powerful, stable EMP field around a massive generator ahead. Proceeding while mounted might damage their mechs' electronic systems. The PCs might be able to dismount and disable the generator on foot. The generator is surrounded by arcing lightning in a steel chamber which poses risk to life and limb.
17-18	The PCs arrive at an underground maglev rail station that carries heavy freight and passenger cars full of active native subalterns. The rail itself extends into titanic, unlit tunnels that would be nearly impossible to traverse on foot. The freight cars are strong enough to carry mechs, and the train seems to be going in the right direction. Unfortunately, the train isn't stopping at the station nearest the signal, so they'll have to get creative or reckless if they want to get off there.
19-20	Artillery on the surface shatters an underground water main. The PCs get little warning, only a slowly growing rumble. After a moment, an approaching black wall will appear down a distant tunnel. On closer examination, the wall is rushing water, surging at destructive speed. If the PCs don't do anything, the water threatens to wash them away, separate them, and flood the area.

AIDING THE FARSEERS

The dismounted pilot, Leslie, will hail the PCs over comms when they make themselves known. Use the following lines of dialogue or improvise as appropriate. If out of line of sight, there is still static on the line.

- **Hailed Over Comms:** *"I can't believe it. Someone else was actually all the way down here? Listen, whoever the hell you are, I've got civvies in danger here! Can you bail us out of this mess?"*
- **Identification:** *"This is Huntress Leslie Eyrios of the Baker's Dozen out of Opal Row. We're Farseers. Annamite Clanfolk. Whatever. Polite introductions can wait till later!"*
- **Situation:** *"Spirits below - I'm a fucking idiot! A hatchling tried to take a chomp out of one of our guys, so I squished it. We were too close to the nest, and I guess the scent of dead hatchling carries. The whole damn horde is after us!"*
- **Pre-Combat:** *"Hold on." There's a moment of silence on the line. "Good news, our Captain's on her way with a hunting party. If you can just hold them off of us until the Baker's Dozen get here, we might just survive this shitshow."*

If the PCs move promptly to aid the Farseers, they will pass a dead forgemouth and the wreckage of Leslie's mech, the pilot having ejected. Moving further, they encounter a pair of forgemouths in pursuit of a party of a dozen civilian explorers. Three guards and the dismounted pilot are peppering the beasts with small-weapons fire to little effect. The group flees through a set of ruined factory doors, forgemouths hot on their heels.

The PCs can catch up to the action inside the underground factory. The area is littered with swift-moving conveyor belts, bubbling molten metal pits, and mechanical equipment. Parts are cast from metal, put onto conveyor belts, whirled at dizzying speed out of, then back into, the factory. Due to a botched data purge of the system during the ~~Exodus~~, the parts are then shuffled back into the molten pits to be remelted and subsequently reforged endlessly.

The Farseers are climbing into the tangled mess of cables that forms this factory's FCU (a potential alternative for PCs who previously failed to upload the virus), but the two forgemouths are slowly circling in, quite capable of ferreting out hiding prey. The arrival of the PCs will send them running, but only until their own reinforcements arrive. Trumpeting roars echo down nearby corridors, announcing the approaching swarm of forgemouths closing in on all sides.

From here, there's no path forward without conflict with the forgemouths entering the factory in number. Proceed to **Combat: Dragon's Den.**

FORGEMOUTHS

The forgemouths are a large, lizardlike breed of black-scaled extremophiles that are endemic to the Alloy River and the Molten Sprawl. The predators primarily hunt smaller animals who tend to hide in crevices, but forgemouth drakes flush them out by belching superheated gasses into the cracks. Female drakes that live to an old age become forgemouth broodguards; they can ignite their gasses and create explosions capable of shattering stone. While they normally do not hunt in packs, they will group up and destroy any perceived threat to their nests, their eggs, and their hatchlings.

A PC that succeeds on a **check** to know more about the forgemouths will learn the previous information. They will also recall that the true name of these forgemouths (as the Farseers call them) is *Salamandria vulcanis,* a species that has been deemed extinct in the wild by xenobiologists for centuries. Their end was caused by the Argent Plague ravaging their habitats and cooling the stars.

COMBAT 1-2:
DRAGON'S DEN

SITREP: Holdout

ENEMY FORCES

FOR 3 PCS: 1x T1 **'Forgemaw Broodguard' - COMMANDER PREDATOR** (**COMMANDER:** Press the Attack; **PREDATOR: SIZE 2,** Hazardous Breath (Concussive), Molten Maw, Primal Hunt (Concussive), Tail Sweep)
2x T1 **'Forgemaw' - VETERAN PREDATOR** (**VETERAN:** +Hull, Steel Jaw; **PREDATOR: SIZE 1,** Hazardous Breath (Thermal), Molten Maw, Primal Hunt (Thermal))
2x T1 **'Forgemaw Hatchling' - GRUNT PREDATOR** (**SIZE ½,** Marking Pheromones, Molten Maw)

FOR 4 PCS: +1x **'Forgemaw' - VETERAN PREDATOR** (**VETERAN:** +Hull, Steel Jaw; **PREDATOR: SIZE 1,** Hazardous Breath (Thermal), Molten Maw, Primal Hunt (Thermal))
+2x T1 'Forgemaw Hatchling' - **GRUNT PREDATOR** (**SIZE ½,** Marking Pheromones, Molten Maw)

FOR 5 PCS: +1x **'Forgemaw' - VETERAN PREDATOR** (**VETERAN:** +Hull, Steel Jaw; **PREDATOR: SIZE 1,** Hazardous Breath (Thermal), Molten Maw, Primal Hunt (Thermal))
Forgemaw Broodguard: Add the **ELITE** template and **VENGEFUL RAGE** trait.

REINFORCEMENTS

FOR 3 PCS: 2x T1 **'Forgemaw' - VETERAN PREDATOR** (**VETERAN:** +Hull, Steel Jaw; **PREDATOR: SIZE 1,** Hazardous Breath (Thermal), Molten Maw, Primal Hunt (Thermal))
4x T1 **'Forgemaw Hatchling' - GRUNT PREDATOR** (**SIZE ½,** Marking Pheromones, Molten Maw)

FOR 4 PCS: +1x **'Forgemaw' - VETERAN PREDATOR (VETERAN:** +Hull, Steel Jaw; **PREDATOR: SIZE 1,** Hazardous Breath (Thermal), Molten Maw, Primal Hunt (Thermal))
+2x T1 **'Forgemaw Hatchling' - GRUNT PREDATOR** (**SIZE ½,** Marking Pheromones, Molten Maw)

FOR 5 PCS: +1x **'Forgemaw' - VETERAN PREDATOR** (**VETERAN:** +Hull, Steel Jaw; **PREDATOR: SIZE 1,** Hazardous Breath (Thermal), Molten Maw, Primal Hunt (Thermal))
Forgemaw Broodguard: Add the **ELITE** template and **VENGEFUL RAGE** trait.

ALLIES

1x **T2 'Farseers Exploration Team' - SQUAD** (Starts with **half HP,** can only use **PRIMARY WEAPON** (**kinetic damage**), see **Details**)

THE STAKES

Huntress Leslie and the other Farseers on her team are being hunted by the forgemaws for trespassing in their territory and killing a hatchling. While the PCs might be in forgemaws' way, their true priority is the tender meat cowering in terror within the cables of the FCU. If nothing is done, the forgemaws will surround the Farseers and flush them out of hiding with their superheated breath. They would surely be devoured.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

See the rules for Holdout (*Lancer Core Rulebook* pg 272). If the forgemaws are reduced to a number that cannot meaningfully threaten the PCs, especially if the broodguard is dead, the GM may decide to have them retreat, ending the combat early and victoriously for the PCs.

DETAILS

The hellish factory continues its endless operation with little regard for the battle. The devices it produces and recycles are fractured, incomplete shapes, clearly the result of errors. The battlefield is a tangled weave of conveyor belts, molten pits, and crane arms.

FARSEERS EXPLORATION TEAM

While Leslie is without her mech, she and the other Farseer guards are still armed with carbines and will fight for their lives. This allied Squad will not leave the cover of the FCU in the center of the map. They are **IMMOBILIZED,** untargetable by the enemy, and immune to all effects, but they will shoot any forgemaws that enter their range. Leslie will follow targeting priorities given to her by the PCs.

Since the Squad starts with **half HP,** it can only make one attack with its **PRIMARY WEAPON** on its turns.

CONVEYOR BELTS

These fast-rolling conveyor lines are constantly moving, and everything on them is coming along for the ride. Each belt is moving in a specific direction as displayed by the painted arrows.

1/turn per character, when a character enters the space of a conveyor belt or ends their turn on it, they move **5 spaces** along the belt. Additionally, at the end of each round, all characters and objects on the belts will move an additional **5 spaces.**

Some conveyor belts end over molten metal pits, and will dump anything riding them into said pits. Other conveyor belts (colored blue) are elevated, meaning **Size 1** and smaller creatures can pass beneath them.

If a conveyor belt would move a character past the edge of the map, they are removed from the battlefield. At the start of the following round, the character can redeploy themselves on the battlefield onto any conveyor belt at the edge of the map as long as the belt's direction is away from the edge.

CRANE ARMS

Throughout the map are mechanized crane arms for moving freight. The cranes are objects (**Size** 1, **HP** 10, **Evasion** 5, **E-Defense** 8). A hacker can seize control of them to throw nearby mechs. If a crane is hit with a **tech attack** the attacker chooses a target within **Range 3** of the Crane. The target can make a **Hull** save against the attacker's **Save Target** with **+2 Difficulty.** On a failure, the target is pulled to any space on the ground within **Range 5** of the Crane, ignoring obstructions along the way. Each crane can only be successfully hacked 1/round.

These crane arms can be used to throw forgemaws onto conveyor belts or into molten pits. They might also be used to relocate a PC out of danger. If the arms are proving problematic for the forgemaws, they may target them with attacks and destroy them.

MOLTEN METAL

The pits of molten metal are **difficult terrain** that is **one space deeper** than the nearby platforms. Any character that enters the molten metal's space or ends their turn in it takes **3 burn** and **2 heat.** Objects in the molten metal take **10 AP energy damage** at the end of each round.

Despite the forgemaws' high resistance to heat, there's no level of tolerance that will let them overcome the infernal temperatures that keep the molten metal liquid. As a reminder, any **heat** that biological characters (such as Predators) take becomes an equivalent amount of **energy damage.**

DEPLOYMENT

Spread the enemy forces out around the **EDZ/IZ** so that they approach from all four corners.
The PCs deploy in the **ADZ/CZ.**

TACTICS

The forgemaws are born hunters, the apex predators of the Sprawl, though their usual prey doesn't have rocket launchers and machine guns. While not overly intelligent, forgemaws are born and raised around conveyor belts, and are familiar with how they work. They won't make mistakes that would have them dragged into molten pits, though the PCs might be able to arrange that anyway.

BROODGUARD

The eldest of the forgemaws orders around the younger members of its species. Unlike its younger kin, the broodguard's **Hazardous Breath** and **Primal Hunt** can be used to knock PCs out of position, onto conveyor belts, or even into molten pits. If **Vengeful Rage** is available, the broodguard will be able to use it frequently with the deaths of the hatchlings.

FORGEMAW

More cautious than their younger kin, the adult forgemaws will approach carefully, using **Primal Hunt** from behind cover and repositioning for an ideal **Hazardous Breath.** Near the end of battle, the forgemaws will charge into the **CZ** to overwhelm the PCs. They'll take advantage of **Lock On** from **Marking Pheromones** to make accurate ranged attacks, or to assist in the charge in.

HATCHLING

Young, dumb, and full of **Marking Pheromones,** these hatchlings will charge in and attack the nearest PC, then probably die.

OUTCOME

PC VICTORY

Having successfully held out, the PCs see the following:

Over the din of your own combat, you hear the rising song of another battle swiftly making its way toward you. Through the open factory doors strides a squad of mechs adorned with Farseer tribal markings carving a bloody path toward you. The lead mech brings its plasma-wreathed sword around and skewers one charging forgemouth. It lifts its squirming body overhead, then casts it into a molten pit.

Stumbling from within the cables around the FCU, the dismounted pilot snaps to attention toward the sword-wielding mech with a strange salute.

"Captain Yeva! Huntress Leslie reporting! Still reporting, thanks to these folks!"

Eight members of the Baker's Dozen taskforce, including Captain Yeva and Hugo, arrive to dispatch and scatter the remaining forgemouths. The survivors flee back to their nest.

Tick one segment of the **Influence** clock; the Farseers owe the PCs a favor for their timely intervention.

PC DEFEAT

Alas, the PCs could not save the Farseers. Instead, they witness a slaughter.

The forgemouths move in, surrounding the FCU, pressing their heads into the tangle of cables. There is a series of gurgling exhalations, followed by a pause. Then the air fills with the screams of the dying as superheated gasses seep into the cracks. Some try to escape the cables, only to be met with the burning maws of the forgemouths. Mercifully, the screams fade quickly, giving way to the sickening sounds of feeding.

The eight members of the Baker's Dozen arrive too late to stop the massacre. Captain Yeva, Hugo, and the six other members of the Baker's Dozen are only able to scatter the remaining forgemouths and prevent them from continuing to hunt the PCs.

MEETING THE FARSEERS

Once the danger has passed, other groups of non-combatant explorers and researchers are brought into the factory, and the Baker's Dozen form a secure perimeter. If the PCs failed to save the Farseers, this factory's FCU has been damaged, and the information on it is unsalvageable. Otherwise, the Farseers' researchers will immediately set about extracting data from FCU

Yeva and Hugo will want to speak with the PCs (dismounted, if PCs are willing). Their attitude will different depending on whether the Farseers were saved.

- **Farseers Saved:** Yeva will vacillate between being cautious and thankful toward the PCs, and it might come off as rude. Hugo, on the other hand, is nothing but polite thankfulness for saving the lives of their clansfolk, apologizing for Yeva's brusqueness. Yeva will also berate Leslie for nearly getting her group killed.
  - ◊ **Yeva:** *"We dragged most of our teams halfway across the Undersprawl to pull your sorry asses out of the fire, only to find someone else beat us to the punch. Thank them for your life, idiot."*

    Leslie will sheepishly bow deeply toward each of you, mumbling her embarrassed but sincere gratitude.
- **Farseers Lost:** Yeva will be grim, and Hugo clearly distraught. They oversee the grisly recovery efforts to extract the half-eaten or half-melted bodies of the dead from the ruin of the FCU. Hugo will thank the PCs for trying, only wishing they could have succeeded.
  - ◊ **Yeva:** *"I am responsible for this. We were too spread out, and Leslie was overconfident. What am I going to tell her mother?"*
- They will ask the PCs why they are down in the Undersprawl. If they tell the truth, Yeva will mention that the **Annorum/*Union*** could have just bought the technical specifications they're looking for from the Farseers, but admits the price given was 'kind of ridiculous'.
- Instead, the PCs' faction opted for the cheaper SIREN virus in order to get it themselves.
  - ◊ **Yeva:** *"Honestly, I think your leaders and the other guys were probably just aching for a good fight. Hope it was worth it."*
- Many of the Farseers will be intensely curious about the PCs and end up staring or asking silly questions about their homeworlds ('are your planets really so tiny?'). Hugo will apologize for them.
  - ◊ **Hugo:** *"For most of us, this is the first time we've met an offworlder. Well, aside from the honored elders who made the journey here."*
- Regardless of whether the PCs rescued the Farseers, Hugo will offer to give them directions to their destination. The Farseers have spent weeks mapping this section of the Undersprawl, and can save them a lot of time otherwise spent wandering.

FARSEER'S MISSION

Hugo will also mention that this factory is likely what the Farseers have been searching for.

Eventually, a researcher will shout over to Yeva that the initial analysis is complete and that this appears to be the correct factory. She offers the PCs the chance to have a look as well, despite Hugo's reservations. If they accept, they join the researchers and see readouts of indecipherable Idish (which the Farseers call Spiritspeak) from the DAEDALUS Remote Unit, the FCU's internal system name.

If they saved the Farseers, Hugo will offer to teach the PCs Spiritspeak during downtime in thanks, and give them the coordinates for ~~Opal Row,~~ the Farseer's capital on the southern edge of the Tropical Belt. In the meantime, he will translate the message for the PCs:

> *"Hephaestus has begun forging Charon's Obol. With it, you will be safe from the Titans for a time. Odysseus is a part of me now, and I cannot return them. There is no redemption, nor forgiveness for what I've done to you and to the Titans.*
>
> *"I am Pythia no more. I have opened the box, and now there is only Pandora."*

The Farseers have found this message, which lists its origin as 'Delphi', numerous times across Beacon and are still unsure of its exact meaning. They are searching for any clues to the device called Charon's Obol. It's likely that this was one of the factories used to create it, but the schematics were purged once the job was complete, as is the case in every other factory they've found linked to it.

If the PCs return to the area later, the Farseers will have departed from the factory, which now sits dead with its FCU removed. Many of the younger forgemouths have been butchered, with certain oral glands and cuts of meat extracted. If the explorer party was killed, their bodies are gone.

Fortunately, it seems this factory's data purge was incomplete. A fragment was left behind. Yeva will share a copy of it with the PCs. The partial technical specifications of Charon's Obol form **Acheron's Call,** an **Exotic Gear,** which can be used by one PC. It can be installed for **0 SP** in the current mission, but costs the normal amount in future missions.

The Farseers will linger, continuing analysis and harvesting meat and organs from the forgemaws. Hugo will politely bid farewell to the PCs when they depart and continue toward the mainframe. With directions from the Farseers, the PCs can follow the route directly there.

Acheron's Call

`2 SP, Unique, Exotic`

When you make an **overheating check** or a **structure damage check,** add together the result of all dice you rolled. You may immediately **teleport** to a free space within an amount of spaces equal **3 + the result total.** For example, if you rolled a 3 and a 4 on a **structure damage check,** you could **teleport** up to 10 spaces away.

A fragment of the Idaeans' key to safety from the Titans. The rest was purged to ensure they would not be followed.

GM NOTE

At this point, the PCs have been through two combats. At **LL1,** this can be difficult with the resources available to low level pilots, and there are still two more combats remaining in the mission. If the PCs have easily succeeded in the previous combats without using too many of their resources, then consider increasing the difficulty of combat in the future, depending on your group. On the other hand, if the PCs are struggling and are already low on **Repairs,** consider throwing them a bone.

In the latter case, the Farseers can see the wear and tear on the PCs mechs. In appreciation for either the success or the attempt at rescuing their kin, they can share **Extra Repairs** as **Reserves** with each of the PCs.

Alternatively, they can give the PCs directions to a nearby underground factory they've mapped which scans mech parts and quickly reproduces spares. Reaching this factory may take additional time. After some **Reserves** are fabricated, the FCU will ask for registered user credentials (in Idish) and refuse to create more parts.

BEAT 1-4:
STRAY DOG STRUT

The PCs reach the deepest layer of the Undersprawl. They get a good look at the area while descending a spiraling ramp to the ground floor. The handheld tracker leads them toward the signal in the deep valleys between titanic molten vats. They pass the casting molds for the tungsten rods, as described in the **Deepest Layer** section.

The approach to the mainframe depends on the status of the **Signal Stolen** clock. If it wasn't filled, then the PCs reach the mainframe first. If it was filled, then the signal vanishes as they're closing in, and reaching the location of the signal has the PCs arrive just as Mirrorsmoke are preparing to haul the mainframe away. Whether the PCs arrive first or last, a confrontation with the MSMC 414th's Steelhounds is inevitable.

The mainframe itself is a large, rugged, heat-resistant device filled to the brim with the invaluable technical specifications, and anchored to the ground with a thick network trunk connection. Its unassuming shape makes it difficult to pick out from any of the thousands of similar devices in the area. Internally, the system is named DAEDALUS Core, though the PCs would need to be able to translate Idish to learn that.

The squadron of Steelhounds are led by Captain Oscar, though he won't identify himself, the Steelhounds, or the MSMC. The soldiers under his command are only a sizable portion of the 414th Detachment, with the rest back in Fengdu. Their mech transponders are off, their identities hidden.

Oscar will first attempt to negotiate with the PCs if they give him the chance, using the following talking points:

- Certain unnamed, powerful people want the information on the mainframe well in advance of the other powers that be.
  - ◊ **Oscar:** *"It's just business, nothing personal. Not unless you want to make it personal."*
- They warn the PCs that if they try to get in their way, things will get messy.
  - ◊ **Oscar:** *"Better to go empty-handed than wind up dead."*

CONVINCING THE HOUNDS

If the PCs arrived before the Steelhounds, they might be able to convince the Steelhounds with a **risky, difficult check** to allow them to make a digital copy of the data, then leave with a physical copy. Both parties get what they want, and the Steelhounds won't tell the HIC that the data was also recovered by another party. This avoids combat with them.

If the PCs don't want to give it up, the most likely outcome is a fight with the Steelhounds in order to claim the mainframe. Proceed to **Combat: Pressure Cooker.**

COMBAT 1-3:
PRESSURE COOKER

Sitrep: Escort or Extraction (see Victory Conditions)

Enemy Forces

For 3 PCs: Oscar, '#####' - 1x T1 **Commander Ronin** (**Commander:** Quick March)
1x T1 **Specialist Mercenary Hornet** (**Specialist:** Artillerist (Stinger Pistol); **Mercenary:** Scout Drone)
1x T1 **Mercenary Scourer** (**Mercenary:** Efficient Killer; **Scourer:** Melt)
1x T1 **Witch**

For 4 PCs: +1x T1 **Veteran Scout** (**Veteran:** +Engineering, Headshot)

For 5 PCs: 1x T1 **Specialist Mercenary Hornet** (**Specialist:** Artillerist (Stinger Pistol); **Mercenary:** Scout Drone)
1x T1 **Mercenary Scourer** (**Mercenary:** Efficient Killer; **Scourer:** Melt)
1x T1 **Veteran Scout** (**Veteran:** +Engineering, Headshot)
1x T1 **Witch**

Reinforcements

For 3 PCs: 1x T1 **Specialist Mercenary Hornet** (**Specialist:** Artillerist (Stinger Pistol); **Mercenary:** Scout Drone)
1x T1 **Mercenary Scourer** (**Mercenary:** Efficient Killer; **Scourer:** Melt)
1x T1 **Veteran Scout** (**Veteran:** +Engineering, Headshot)
1x T1 **Witch**

For 4 PCs: +1x T1 **Veteran Scout** (**Veteran:** +Engineering, Headshot)

For 5 PCs: 1x T1 **Specialist Mercenary Hornet** (**Specialist:** Artillerist (Stinger Pistol); **Mercenary:** Scout Drone)
+1x T1 **Mercenary Scourer** (**Mercenary:** Efficient Killer; **Scourer:** Melt)

THE STAKES

Having fought hard and journeyed through molten hell, the PCs risk losing everything to the Steelhounds. If they cannot retrieve the mainframe, then the mercenaries will make off with it and the PCs efforts will have been wasted.

The Steelhounds have strict orders not to overly antagonize the Annorum and Union, and so they will not go out of their way to kill the PCs.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

The Mainframe is a **Size 1** objective. The status of the **Signal Stolen** clock will decide the sitrep.

If the PCs arrived first to claim the mainframe, then they need only **Escort** it to the **EZ.** Otherwise, the Steelhounds reached the mainframe first. The PCs will need to first reach the mainframe and then drag it to the **EZ** for **Extraction.**

The mercenaries have a keen sense of self preservation; if the PCs reduce the mercs' numbers to the point where they could not reasonably pose a threat, they will retreat, resulting in the PCs' victory.

DETAILS

These Mirrorsmoke mercenaries are veterans who have been through multiple missions (both above board and below it) together. Most go according to plan, with all violence being one-sided and short. That the Steelhounds are fighting the PCs at all means something has gone wrong, and they're not ready for the outnumbered PCs to pose a true threat.

Battlefield complications include the ever-present molten metal and the rotary fans.

MOLTEN METAL

The molten metal canals are **difficult terrain** that is **one space deeper** than the canal walls around them. Any character that enters the molten metal's space or ends their turn in it takes **3 burn** and **2 heat.** Objects in the molten metal take **10 AP energy damage** at the end of each round

ROTARY FANS
These powerful rotary fans generate hurricane force winds capable of lifting even the heaviest of mechs. The fan's space is the updraft zone. Any character that enters the updraft zone, or begins their turn in it, **flies 2 spaces up**, so that the bottom of their space matches the height of the ledge.

While atop the updraft, a character can use their movement to **fly** to any adjacent space. If the turn ends without the character moving onto a solid surface, then they fall flailing, taking **1d3 kinetic damage** and landing **Prone.** If this occurs, the character cannot be affected by the updraft zone until the start of their next turn.

In this combat, the updraft zones provide swift routes for moving up the multiple tiered ledges, which would otherwise have to be climbed. However, this makes them double as choke points, and unwary wind-riders may find themselves stuck in an enemy's **Threat** and bouncing up and down repeatedly, falling **Prone** each time.

DEPLOYMENT
The deployment of the PCs and enemy forces will depend on the sitrep:

- **Escort:** Deploy the enemy forces throughout the bottom third of the map (the lowest section). Deploy the PCs anywhere in a **Burst 3** around the **Objective.**
- **Extraction:** Deploy 2 NPCs (3 for 5 PCs) from the enemy forces anywhere in a **Burst 3** around the **Objective**. The rest of the Enemy Forces become Reinforcements to be deployed in future rounds. Deploy the PCs in the **EZ.**

TACTICS
With a relatively fragile and low damage lineup, the Steelhounds will be leaning hard on the control options available to them. What the mercs lack in direct firepower, they make up with disabling effects and a high **heat** output. There's no heroes or martyrs among the merc ranks; they'll avoid putting themselves at too much risk by sticking to cover.

HORNET
The quintessential annoying little shit. Use the **Artillery** on its **Stinger Pistol** to punish PCs who group up, but beware the **Ordnance** tag. Drop the **Scout Drone** in the midst of melee once the Ronin gets stuck in, or to disrupt PCs who rely on hiding. Use **Impale Systems** on whichever PCs are showing themselves to be the biggest threats. Pour on the **heat** with the basic **Invade** option.

RONIN -
Use this Commander judiciously. Don't immediately charge into melee range; let the Hornets, Witches, and Scouts soften up the PCs first. Use **Quick March** to help the Scourers and Witches into good cover. Take advantage of any **Exposed** PCs. If **Charged Slash** is available, it's a good opener immediately after charging in to hit as many as possible.

SCOURER
Be careful with positioning; the Scourer is relatively fragile and their damage is an important payoff for the **heat** generated by the Hornet and Witch. **Exposed** PCs are the top priority targets. Use **Melt** to destroy the PCs' cover and give them no place to hide. Take advantage of the Scout's **Lock On** for hitting the second **Thermal Lance** shot for **Focus Down.**

SCOUT
While the group doesn't have great synergy with the Scout's **Lock On**, it's still very useful for helping the Ronin deal critical hits or helping the Scourer land its devastating second shot. Additionally, with the Scout's high accuracy on its **Marking Rifle,** it's ideal for landing **Headshot** on ranged PCs in order to blind them. **Cloaking Field** can be a life saver if the Ronin or Scourer get caught out of position. With the Scout's high **Systems,** it can also help inflict **heat** on the PCs with an **Invade.**

WITCH
Likely a priority target for the PCs. Be careful not to waste these fragile but powerful sources of **heat.** Get the PCs **Exposed,** then turn their allies' weapons on them. If necessary, remember that you can target other NPCs with **Predatory Logic.**

OUTCOME
PC VICTORY
The PCs escape with the mainframe in hand, leaving the shattered Steelhounds in disarray behind them. They reach the ramp back to the upper layers of the Undersprawl without any further difficulties. Operation Pillowtalk enters Phase 3, the extraction.

PC DEFEAT
The mainframe is claimed by the Steelhounds. With orders not to overly antagonize either the Annorum or Union's forces, they won't stop to finish off the PCs. Instead, they'll prioritize evacuating the scene and meeting up their own transportation back to Fengdu. The mission ends here in failure, and the PCs can return to the surface for extraction.

Proceed to the **Mission Outcome** section.

BEAT 1-5:
MELTING WINGS

MOVING ON

The PCs have the chance to safely rest and repair their mechs once they've made it away into the maze of the middle layer. If they've won it, the mainframe stops generating the signal once it loses power, so the Steelhounds won't be able to easily follow them.

Once the PCs have reached relative safety, they have the option of continuing to carry around the mainframe, or attempting to download the data and transfer it into one or more of their mech's data storage units. The effort will require a **check** to succeed at navigating the unfamiliar system architecture. Otherwise, they will have to lug it along.

The PCs can return along the same route they originally took to get to the surface without issue. The situation on the surface has devolved while they were in the Undersprawl.

THE SURFACE

As they ascend, the PCs will hear the frequent pounding of artillery fire sending vibrations through the underground. Then will come the crackle of mechanized munitions, followed by small arms fire. Finally, glimpsing hazy daylight at the entrance of the tunnel ramp, the PCs will be inundated with chatter over comms from a dozen different running engagements until they filter out the noise of war.

The stalemate has given way to vicious ground combat across the Molten Sprawl. Swathes of factories have been reduced to rubble and the fog of war has settled over the battlefield. The skies overhead are darkened by acrid smoke and concrete dust thrown up by light artillery. Despite the heated ground war, the capital ships and their escorts have not yet fired on each other.

Once the PCs are topside, they'll be contacted by **Altair/*Berke.*** Their contact will be keen to recover the PCs. They will begin leading a team in the PCs' direction and order an extraction shuttle, telling the PCs to hunker down and wait.

After a brief pause, **Altair/*Berke*** contacts the PCs again to alert them that the Enemy's movements have changed. There are a few options for what went wrong that the GM can choose from, depending on what fits circumstances:

- In retribution, the Steelhounds sent an anonymous broadcast to all forces, warning the Enemy that the PCs have the mainframe.
- A spy notified the Enemy of the PCs and the mainframe.
- Communications have been tapped by the enemy.
- The PCs' presence was noticed by orbiting ships, and they were marked as a high priority target after being spotted during the action at the recently destroyed factory.

What happens next will differ depending on the PCs' Path.

ANNORUM PATH

Enemy mech signatures begin closing in from every direction, far more than the PCs can hope to defeat. Marshall Ludov contacts the PCs directly and tells them to hold strong, that aerial support is incoming. Then the sky is filled with hovering metal.

The AENS Gladiolus, a massive subline cruiser, glides into place overhead, struggling against gravity with the force of its thrusters.

It fires down at Union ground forces around the PCs and deploys dropships loaded with kuirassers. The PCs are soon to be extracted, until something goes very wrong.

A signal is broadcast from the UNS-BB Chekhov, Union's flagship. A voice over AllComms is accompanied by a face, a man you may recognize from your briefings. It's Representative Royce Merrick of CentComm, an elected leader of Union. Contempt and hatred are at war on his face as he speaks.

Royce: *"Did you really think we'd just let you walk away, prize in hand? The wielder of these weapons decides the future. And who holds them? If it's between you sanctimonious bastards and no one, then that's no choice at all."*

UNION PATH

Battle rages around the PCs as friendly and Annorum mech signatures approach, many going suddenly silent. It seems as though Union might gain the upper hand. Then the sky is filled with hovering metal.

The *AENS Gladiolus* subline cruiser glides into place overhead, struggling against gravity with its thrusters.

It fires down at Union ground forces around the PCs and sends out dropships loaded with kuirassers. Admiral Torus contacts the PCs via video comms and orders them to surrender and not throw their lives away, and that they'll be exchanged as prisoners of war once the truce agreements are in place. Then things go very wrong.

A second person appears alongside Admiral Torus on camera. Royce Merrick. He looks puzzled as he speaks to the Admiral.

Royce: *"Belay that order. Admiral, you can't seriously be suggesting we allow these weapons to fall into the hands of those animals. The wielders will decide the future. If we can't have them, then no one can. I've already sent instructions to the Captain of the Antenora."*

Torus: *"Instructions?" The Admiral turns to look at something off screen, and his face goes pale. "No, you crazy bastard, what have you done?" The video feed breaks and the call is cut short.*

BOTH PATHS

Blinding light splashes overhead, outlining the Gladiolus's dark frame, a bright knife piercing through shadow. Then the light fades, and there's wide, gaping holes in either side of the cruiser. A secondary, distant flash marks the spot where the capitol ship's long-cycle weapon impacts, flattening factories in a blast multiple kilometers wide and making the ground quake and fracture beneath you. The sky goes dark, suddenly crisscrossed by beams of light.

Then the Gladiolus is listing to one side, its thrusters failing. The kilometer-long ship begins its ponderous but accelerating descent toward the ground. Towards you.

THE FALL

The UNS-LS *Antenora's* shot has impacted the ground and automatically triggered the solar satellites to cease shining and instead concentrate solar lasers on the ship. The frigate is forced to perform an ill-fated emergency blinkjump to escape their withering assault. The surprising counterfire from the solar satellites is all that prevents Union and Annorate ships from engaging each other in battle. However, their fate is irrelevant to the PCs' current situation.

The *Gladiolus* is on a collision course with the ground and the PCs don't have time to get out from under the massive cruiser. The ramp back to the Undersprawl is clogged with Enemy forces trying to escape.

The PCs are contacted by **Altair**/***Berke*** and given the location of a nearby stockpile of crashfoam, kept in case the first batch failed. If the PCs can reach it and activate it, they might just survive.

Unfortunately, by this point, Enemy intelligence has determined the purpose and capabilities of the crashfoam from the failed attempts of other Operation Pillowtalk teams. Their forces in the area are moving toward the same cache in a panic, hoping to save themselves.

If the PCs intend to reach safety, they'll need to fight for it. Begin **Combat: Hammer and Anvil.**

COMBAT 1-4: HAMMER AND ANVIL

ANNORUM PATH

Sitrep: Gauntlet

Enemy Forces

For 3 PCs: 1x T1 **Specialist Barricade** (**Specialist:** Martial Artist; **Barricade:** Titan-Snare Drone)
1x T1 **Demolisher** (Broad-Sweep Haft)

For 4 PCs: +1x T1 **Support** (Remote Reboot)

For 5 PCs: +1x T1 **Veteran Assault** (**Veteran:** +Agility, Limitless)

Reinforcements

For 3 PCs: 1x T1 **Veteran Assault** (**Veteran:** +Agility, Limitless)
1x T1 **Specialist Barricade** (**Specialist:** Martial Artist; **Barricade:** Titan-Snare Drone)
1x T1 **Engineer**
1x T1 **Support** (Remote Reboot)

For 4 PCs: +1x T1 **Demolisher** (Broad-Sweep Haft)
+1x T1 **Engineer**

For 5 PCs: +1x T1 **Engineer**
+1x T1 **Support** (Remote Reboot)

UNION PATH

Sitrep: Gauntlet

Enemy Forces

For 3 PCs: 1x T1 **Specialist Barricade** (**Specialist:** Martial Artist; **Barricade:** Titan-Snare Drone)
1x T1 **Sentinel** (Punisher Ammunition)

For 4 PCs: +1x T1 **Priest**

For 5 PCs: +1x T1 **Veteran Specter** (**Veteran:** +Agility, Acrobat)

Reinforcements

For 3 PCs: 1x T1 **Veteran Specter** (**Veteran:** +Agility, Acrobat)
1x T1 **Specialist Barricade** (**Specialist:** Martial Artist; **Barricade:** Titan-Snare Drone)
1x T1 **Ace**
1x T1 **Priest**

For 4 PCs: +1x T1 **Ace**
+1x T1 **Sentinel** (Punisher Ammunition)

For 5 PCs: +1x T1 **Ace**
+1x T1 **Priest**

THE STAKES

Having returned to the surface and having their exfiltration plans utterly derailed, the PCs have been placed between a falling rock and a hard place. While the mission up until now has been for the recovery of the mainframe, the primary objective here is survival. The PCs face the very real possibility of sudden death. Still, having come this far with the mainframe, it would be a shame to lose it as well.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

See the rules for Gauntlet (*Lancer Core Rulebook* pg 271). If the PCs are still hauling the mainframe and have not uploaded its data to their mechs, it is a **Size 1 Objective** and follows the usual rules for moving it from the **Escort/Extraction** sitreps. If the PCs want to prevent the mainframe's destruction, the **Objective** must be in the **CZ** at the end of the combat.

If the enemy forces are decimated and the PCs are in a dominant position in the **CZ,** the GM may offer the PCs a chance to make a **check** to break their morale; for example the Enemy might give up and try to run, or surrender their mechs and run into the safety of the foam on foot, if the PCs allow it.

DETAILS

As the *Gladiolus* descends, it seems to expand until it fills the sky. Its few functional thrusters try and fail to arrest its fall. Beneath the sinking ship, the world goes mad. Every fighter engages in a frenzied struggle to survive.

While the crashfoam stockpile is big, the imminent impact will test the material to its limits. Only those at the center of the resulting crashfoam sphere are likely to survive. Safe space is limited and mechs are big, so the PCs and the nearby Enemy who were previously maneuvering to surround them are now all forced to vie for their lives.

GM NOTE

It's recommended to reduce the amount of rounds before ending the combat from eight to six. This keeps tension high as PCs are forced to rush to safety, and prevents the combat from dragging on too long.

Coherent thought is the first casualty. Each round should narratively be depicted as no more than two or three seconds long. To help roleplay this, the GM can limit comms between PCs to a few words each round instead of sentences. If the GM desires, they can put a time limit on each players' turn to keep up momentum and throw them off balance. If they do so, the GM should put similar limitations on themselves.

Rubble and the implements of war are scattered across the battlefield. Artillery craters dot the land. Explosive mines wait to catch the unwary. The molten canals are clogged with slowly melting debris. This hellish stage serves as the finale of the mission.

MOLTEN METAL

Molten metal canals are **difficult terrain** that is **one space deeper** than the bridges and canal walls around them. Any character that enters the molten metal's space or ends their turn in it takes **3 burn** and **2 heat.** Objects in the molten metal take **10 AP energy damage** at the end of each round.

MINES

Any character that enters a mine's space causes it to detonate in a **Blast 1** explosion. Characters in the area must succeed on an **Agility** save or take **5 explosive damage.** On a success, they take **half damage.** Characters entering a mine's space on their turn can disable it by succeeding on a **Systems** check as a **quick action**. However, on a failure, the mine detonates. Once triggered, the mine is destroyed.

DEPLOYMENT

Spread the enemy forces evenly between the northern and the southwestern sections of the map to help block off both primary routes.

The PCs deploy in the **ADZ.** If present, the **Objective** deploys with the PCs.

REINFORCEMENTS

It's recommended to deploy 1 or 2 NPCs from Reinforcements at the end of each round, instead of deploying all Reinforcements at once, as usual. Placing them all at once may block off the routes too effectively.

TACTICS

The Enemy's command structure is in disarray, and no one beneath the falling ship is listening to orders anyway. Abandon the goal of optimal play and precise tactics. Embrace the chaos. Still, the Enemy recognizes that there's not enough room for everyone to gather around the crashfoam (at least, not in mechs), and so they'll do their best to keep the PCs from reaching it.

The NPCs present in this combat will differ depending on the PCs' Path, but the Barricade will be present for both Paths.

BARRICADE

Once again, the Barricade's job is to prevent the PCs from crossing the battlefield. Use **Mobile Printer** and the **Titan-Snare Drone** to block off bridges and routes around rubble as PCs approach them. **Martial Artist** will come in clutch with **Grapple** for pulling PCs out of the **CZ,** or **Ram** to knock them into the canals.

Annorum Path

ASSAULT

This durable mech works well at range and at close quarters, making it the perfect threat for a chaotic battle. **Limitless** is a double-edged blade with the cost of **heat,** but it grants unmatched short-term power. If the result is getting **Exposed** or a meltdown, then so be it.

DEMOLISHER

The second steel wall, after the Barricade. Deploy this slow, plodding mech as Reinforcements early in the battle and move toward the **CZ,** or else it will get left behind the frontlines. Take advantage of the relatively narrow confines of the routes and the CZ itself by hitting as many as possible with **Broad-Sweep Haft.**

ENGINEER

Good at holding a defensive point, but less adept at pursuing and attacking. If the PCs focus on one route around the canals in the middle, deploy the Engineer on the opposite side and move into the **CZ** to defend it.

SUPPORT

Clear **burn** from allies if they fall in the canals or slow down PCs with the **Sealant Gun.** The Support's large size can make for a good blocker. Even its wreck can contribute by blocking a bridge.

UNION PATH

ACE

Annoying and hard to nail down, the Ace should punish the PCs whenever they group up. Its mobility makes it easy to rush into the **CZ** toward the end of the battle.

PRIEST

Focus **Abjure** on PCs who are likely to want to **Barrage** on their next turn. **Dispersal Shield** works wonders on either the **Ace** or the **Specter,** whose hard-to-hit nature will make the limited charges last longer. **Investiture** works best on the **Sentinel** or **Barricade,** since the other mechs are likely to move out of its range.

SENTINEL

If the PCs all decide to move down a single route, the Sentinel is adept at preventing groups of PCs from moving with **Eye of Midnight.** If not, focus on catching and forcing individuals to turn and fight outside of the **CZ** instead of moving toward it.

SPECTER

Use this mech's high mobility from **Prowl** to catch PCs who race ahead of the group or circle around and ambush those who fall behind. With the large **Threat** of the **Monowire Sword,** the Specter can deter PC movement.

OUTCOME

PC VICTORY

The PCs manage to reach and activate the crashfoam stockpile just in time. Depending on how the battle went, if the mainframe was left behind, then it is destroyed. If it was in the Control Zone at the end of combat, then it is preserved. If the data was instead uploaded to one or more PC mechs, then so long as not all mechs with the data were destroyed, the data is secured.

PC DEFEAT

The PCs are unable to secure a position by the stockpile and are forced out by the Enemy forces. Only the Enemy are protected by the erupting dome of foam.

Locked out of safety beneath the falling ship, the PCs have a very short time to act in the moments before impact. Each PC can make a single **difficult, risky check** to either save themselves or save another. Determine the results of all rolls before describing the consequences in case one PC wants to save another that failed. On a roll of 9 or less, the PC is killed. On a roll of 19 or less, the character rolls a d6, dying on a result of 3 or less. On a roll of 20 or more, the PC survives. Those who make a check to save another PC and are not saved themselves automatically die.

A surviving PC is able to protect the mainframe, if present. If the data was instead uploaded to a mech, then the data is secured so long as the pilot survives.

BEAT 1-6:
BURIED ALIVE

Whoever survives the crash of the *AENS Gladiolus* is trapped under hundreds of thousands of tons of metal wreckage. After some hours, they'll receive faint, staticky communications from **Altair**/***Berke*** telling the PCs to settle in. A rescue team is working on excavating them, though it may be a while. Until then, the PCs are locked in their cockpits, bodies in coffins. Fortunately, short-range comms seem to be able to reach from one buried mech to another, and to the surface. How they pass the time will depend on their Path.

Annorum Path

Altair leads the onsite team for the search and rescue effort. He'll try and strike up a conversation with the PCs, asking them how and why they became pilots or kuirassers. Give the PCs a chance to each talk about themselves if they want to (don't force it). Then Altair will speak about his own call to battle.

Altair: *"I am the third child of the Anno. As was decided centuries ago by royal decree, 'the third child shall be given to war'. I had no choice in the matter, though honestly, I don't regret it. In my younger years, I had a chip on my shoulder. I thought I was born brave and strong, right up until after I froze in my very first battle."*

"My mech was out of position, out of cover, and all I could do was stare at the carnage around me. Then a Knight tackled me behind a wall just before a Union shell plowed a muddy furrow a hundred meters long from the spot I'd just been standing. She shouted at me, 'get down dumbass--I mean, your grace'. It's funny now, but back then it changed how I saw things. It helped me understand what it means to send people to war."

"My life has been marked by battles ever since. I can't say I've ever enjoyed the fighting, but at least I had my father's respect. Now, even that…"

UNION PATH

Berke leads the onsite team for the search and rescue efforts, and will remain in contact with the PCs. If anyone openly questions Royce Merrick's actions and motives, or insults him, Berke will be understanding, but disagree. Royce made the right call for Union at large in ordering the attack on the *Gladiolus,* in Berke's opinion.

Berke: *"All soldiers are expendable. I am no exception."*

Berke is well experienced with long, boring waits. He'll ask if anyone wants to tell a story. It can be about battle, or good times, or bad. Anything to pass the time. Give the PCs a chance to each tell a story if they want to (don't force it). Then Berke can tell his own story.

Berke: *"It was 21 years ago, subjective time. We were told to hold Fort Vancliffe on Timur, a world that Union had all but written off as Annorum property. On a raid, my mech took a hit and my cockpit folded in on itself. Broke both my legs and took my eye. The Annies took me and a couple dozen others prisoner."*

"We escaped two weeks later, borrowing a few mechs along the way. The preening bastards got lazy, complacent. They died for it, and so did we. Only a dozen of us made it back in time to crash into the backs of the Annies around the Fort. Only seven survived the day. Only three survived the siege. And only I survived the battle of Timur out of all those prisoners… my comrades."

"We held back the flood of Annies. And they call me the 'Dam of Vancliffe' as if I did it alone. I would not be here without them."

BOTH PATHS

After 28 hours of being trapped under the wreckage, the survivors are finally rescued, being pulled from their buried mechs. The surface is a disaster zone, with factory rubble strewn into the visible distance. Search and rescue teams from both sides work tirelessly to excavate survivors trapped beneath rubble.

If the PCs were able to secure the mainframe or its data, the excavation teams scramble to retrieve it. The Enemy forces in the area will observe this, but abide by the truce.

Annorum Path: Altair leads the PCs through the partially collapsed decks of the *Gladiolus* and onto the surface to meet Galea, who stands watch with her forces. There's a tense standoff occurring outside between Galea and Berke, a legendary Union lancer, currently dismounted and leading a nearby rescue team. Then Altair reminds Galea of the truce, and she reluctantly departs, leading her forces elsewhere.

Union Path: After Berke leads the PCs through the partially collapsed decks of the *Gladiolus* and onto the surface, they meet Lt. Bailey who oversees the other search and rescue efforts. There is a tense standoff when Berke sees Lady Galea Vebelle, legendary kavaliere of the Annorum, mounted in her mech and staring across the ruined battlefield. Then Bailey tells Berke to stand down, reminding him of the truce.

DEBRIEF

Altair/*Bailey* will debrief the PCs and inform them of events since the crash. This conversation can occur after the PCs are safely extracted, or during their lengthy excavation if the PCs are eager to learn what happened:

- Representative Royce Merrick ordered the *UNS-LS Antenora* to fire its spinal cannon at the *AENS Gladiolus* and forced it to crash land. This might have sparked an all-out conflict between capital ships had something not intervened.
- Immediately after impact, dozens of solar satellites went dark and rotated to direct focused energy beams onto the *Antenora.* The solar beams tore into the ship, cutting half-molten chunks off of it. It was already breaking apart by the time the ship's Captain attempted to flee via blinkjump. They haven't been heard from since. Scanner readings from just before the blinkjump indicate the jumpdrive might have been damaged, meaning the ship was likely lost in the blink.
- Union Representative Vodena Park was aboard the ship. Her status is unknown.
- Minutes later, during the confusion, orders for a ceasefire arrived directly from the headquarters of both the AUC and the UN. Terms for a truce on Beacon have been ratified by CentComm and the Anno. With too much to gain for both sides on the frontier world, there is to be no direct conflict between the two… for now.
- Both sides have agreed to pursue means for researching Beacon's technology other than the hotly contested Molten Sprawl. However, the terms state that each side keeps whatever was gained prior to the cessation of hostilities. If the PCs were able to recover the data from the mainframe, their efforts stand to benefit their faction tremendously.
- ***Union Path:*** Bailey reports that after the *Antenora* blinkjumped, Admiral Torus had a physical altercation with Royce (i.e. punched him in the face). Torus was then temporarily relieved of command and placed on administrative leave. Search parties have been sent to scout around the planet for its transponder signal, but there's little hope. With Vodena out of the picture, Royce has full control over Union's expedition on Beacon

Having succeeded or failed at their mission, the PCs are shipped home.

MISSION OUTCOME

Depending on their actions, the PCs will have recovered the mainframe or its data, or failed their mission. The exact outcome of failure will depend on the section of the mission they failed. See below for the various possible outcomes.

MISSION SUCCESS

The PCs are publicly lauded for their accomplishments by **Ludov**/***Royce (sporting a fresh bruise).*** The technical specifications they retrieve are divided up between research teams both on and off-world.

While the repercussions of gaining this knowledge will take time to affect the forces on Beacon, the long-term effects are still taken into account. Tick one segment of the PCs' faction **Strength** clock.

MISSION FAILURE

DURING COMBAT: HAMMER AND ANVIL

If the PCs lost the mainframe or the data during the final combat, then the mission will be viewed as a wash. While the PCs were unsuccessful, they did manage to avoid the enemy capturing the data. Do not tick any **Strength** clock.

ANY OTHER TIME

If the PCs encounter failure at any other point of the mission, then the GM and players must decide together if the mission could potentially be salvaged by another means to achieve the goal. If not, the stalemate between the Annorum and Union drags on for another month, descending into a war of attrition.

At the height of frustration, Royce orders a full-on attack starting with the *Antenora*, leading to the same results: chaos, destruction, the *Antenora's* vanishing, then a truce between Union and the Annorum.

Whether the PCs play a part in these events is up to the GM. If the GM wants to roughly follow the events of the mission, it could be that the PCs are on the ground beneath the *Gladiolus* when it is struck, having been a part of the extended conflict.

Regardless, the lengthy stalemate has worn down both sides. Untick one segment of both the Annorum and the Union's **Strength** clocks.

ROYCE CONFRONTATION

Union PCs might understandably be angry over Royce's choice to endanger their lives in shooting down the *Gladiolus.* If they confront him, Royce will sincerely apologize for risking the PCs, but affirm his view that the cost of losing the data was too great.

Royce will never be alone with the PCs, he will always have Berke acting as bodyguard, alongside other nearby marines loyal to him. If the PCs are rude, Royce will warn them. If they persist, or attempt violence, he'll have them thrown in the brig for an extended period, where they might miss out on parts of downtime.

If this occurs, Bailey will contact them in the brig and ask them to lay low for now. She and Admiral Torus are working to find Vodena Park, and they are talking to the Coalitionists of CentComm to see what can be done about Royce.

If the PCs are completely unwilling to tolerate these conditions and continue on missions with Union, this may be an opportunity for the PCs to change sides over to the Annorum Path. Talk to your players about this option.

THE FUTURE

With the showdown between the Annorum and Union temporarily on hold, each faction looks toward settling into Beacon. As its human population swells, much remains uncertain about this transitional period. There will be growing pains, and losses along the way. Buried secrets and hidden dangers lie just beneath the surface of the titantic world, waiting to be uncovered.

Even with war on the backburner, the PCs will have no lack of work.

DEMO NOTE

This marks the end of the *Pass the Torch* Demo, but not the end of the story. These are three missions out of the planned twenty-one missions, which span across three Acts.

If you enjoyed the Demo, please consider supporting the Kickstarter or checking out Act 1 once it's out! If you're interested in being part of the community, check out the Discord channel here: **https://discord.gg/FwjDQuHsUq**

SECTION 4

APPENDIX

NEW OPTIONS

This section contains new options for players and GMs. These include the following:

- Two new talents: **Black Hat** and **Recollector.**
- Three new licenses: the **SSC Apollo,** the **IPS-N Nemo,** and the **HA Scipio.**
- One new sitrep: **Demolition.**
- Two new NPCs: the **Duelist** and the **Predator.**
- One new NPC template: the **Specialist.**
- Additional **Reserves.**
- New **Exotic Gear.**

ADDITIONAL MECHANICS

In this section are additional rules relevant to combat, such as conditions, terms, and equipment tags. These have been taken from official Lancer supplements and had their source marked.

STATUS: INTANGIBLE

Intangible characters can move through obstructions such as characters or terrain but not end their turns in them. They, their actions, and any effects they own or control can only affect other Intangible characters and objects. Tangible characters can move through **Intangible** characters and objects but not end their turns inside their spaces and can't affect them in any way. **Intangible** characters cannot capture points or count for zones (for sitreps) and don't count as adjacent to tangible characters.

Effects that are already active on a character when they become **Intangible,** such as statuses, remain active, but effects that require an ongoing interaction between two characters or objects (like traps or force fields) end. If a mech becomes **Intangible,** its pilot remains **Intangible** for the same duration.

Source: *Field Guide to the Karrakin Trade Baronies pg. 138*

TAG: EXOTIC

Once acquired, this system becomes a permanent part of the character, but does not increase their **LL** or count as a **license rank** for the purposes of gaining core bonuses. If it is destroyed or damaged, it can be repaired or reprinted as any other gear with no penalty. Exotic gear can only be installed or removed during a **Full Repair**, like any other gear. Characters may install up to **two pieces of gear** with the **Exotic Gear** tag at a time, but can own any number of pieces with the tag.

Source: *No Room for a Wallflower - Act 1 pg. 10.*

NEW TALENTS

BLACK HAT

A professional politely steps inside, does their business, and leaves without a trace. Grace, poise, and precision. How very civil. How very boring.

A true omnidiver crashes through the front door, sets off every alarm, loots and pillages, torches the place, and pisses on ashes. Then they skedaddle before the admins finish furrowing their brows in concern. It's a dog eat god galaxy out there, so grip it by its cyberhandles and shake it till it breaks.

NETSPIKE

You gain **+1 Accuracy** on tech attacks against targets in the **Danger Zone.**

OMNIKNIGHT

Gain the following options for **Invade:**

Battering RAM. Characters receive **1 heat** whenever they are hit by a **tech attack** (other than this one) or fail a **Systems** save until their firewall is reset with a successful **Systems** check as a **quick action.** This effect does not stack with itself.

Topple Statue. If the target does not move by the end of its next turn, they are knocked **Prone** and become **Shredded** until the end of their following turn.

GLITCH KING

Your **Quick Tech Invade** actions gain **Threat 2** as if they were weapons. When a hostile character triggers **Overwatch** within an **Invade** action's **Threat,** you replace the **Skirmish** with the **Invade** action.

You also gain the following option for **Invade:**

Overload. If the target is **Exposed** after this **Invade,** it must make an **Engineering** saving throw. On a failure, the target and characters adjacent to it take half the target's **Heat Cap** as **explosive** damage. On a success, the target only takes half damage and adjacent characters are unaffected. This can only be used **1/round** on each character.

RECOLLECTOR

"Humans experiencing their first true forays into Witness have different ways of describing it. For some it is like déjà vu, recalling events that never happened to you. For others, it is like meeting an old friend for the first time.

"When I felt the call, I was terrified. To answer it was to bare my soul, to share everything: my joy, my pain, my glory, and my shame. I believed I was to be judged and found wanting. Instead, I found strong backs to bear my burdens alongside me, even as I bore theirs. I was not saved, nor redeemed, but none of us were. We treasured our brightest moments and mourned our sorrows, even as we forged new memories together."

MEMENTO

Make a **check** with your **Grit** as a **quick action** to invoke a memory. On a success, choose a character other than yourself within **Range 10** and affect it with one of the following **memory types:**

- **Despair:** The target is **Immobilized** and **Impaired** until the end of their next turn.
- **Fury:** The target gains **+1 Accuracy** on attacks until the end of their next turn. Their next attack that hits deals **+1d6 bonus damage.**
- **Joy:** The target gains **4+Grit Overshield.** While they have this **Overshield,** they gain **+1 Accuracy** to checks and saves.

Each **memory type** can only be used **1/mission.**

ECHOING PAST

Gain the following **memory types:**

- **Disgust:** The target receives **1 heat** each time it is hit by an attack or fails a save until the end of your next turn.
- **Fear:** The target is **Jammed** until the end of their next turn.
- **Hope:** The next time the target would receive **structure damage,** they are instead reduced to **1 HP.** This effect lasts until triggered, or until the end of the scene.

SHARED MEMORY

When you are successful on a **check** to invoke a memory**,** you may choose up to two characters other than yourself to affect. Even on a failure, you may still affect one character, though doing so counts as using the **memory type.**

If the result of **check** is **20+,** you can target up to three characters, including yourself, but an additional character chosen by the GM is also targeted without **Range** restrictions. If the memory type was **Despair, Fear,** or **Disgust,** then the additional target is yourself or an ally. If the memory type was **Fury, Joy,** or **Hope,** then the additional target is a hostile character.

NEW MECHS

Three new licenses are available for players:

- **SSC Apollo:** An acrobatic, close-range Striker frame that sends itself, its allies, and its opponents flying across the battlefield.
- **IPS-N Nemo:** A Support frame specialized in using nanite swarms to aid its allies. In doing so, it melts down the enemy and the world around them.
- **HA Scipio:** An Artillery frame dedicated to obliterating wide swathes of terrain, leaving irradiated ruins in its wake.

SIZE 1

SSC APOLLO

Striker/Controller

The most recent model showcased by the Exotic Materials Group has been the source of controversy, which has been drowned out due to the revolutionary concepts on display. The Apollo is a highly experimental frame developed utilizing the gravitational and extraspatial technology discovered on Beacon. While research into this technology is ongoing, the SSC wanted to leverage its edge over its competitors by releasing the beginnings of a new line of combat chassis prior to the blink gate to Beacon opening.

As a symbol, the Apollo demonstrates both SSC's commitment to bleeding edge innovation, and the ruthlessness of the Exotic Materials Group. In its race to leverage Beacon's advanced technology before the other manufacturers, the SSC placed immense pressure on the indebted Farseers. They withheld treatment of the potentially fatal alpinist syndrome, the genetic disease which haunts the Farseers, in order to squeeze the carefully safeguarded secrets of the Annamite clan on Beacon. Once the transaction was achieved, SSC wasted no time in iterating on the clan's designs.

CORE STATS

Size: 1
Armor: 0

HULL
HP: 8
Repair Cap: 3

AGILITY
Evasion: 10
Speed: 5

Save Target: 11
Sensors: 10

SYSTEMS
E-Defense: 8
Tech Attack: +0
SP: 7

ENGINEERING
Heat Cap: 5

TRAITS

TERMINAL VELOCITY

When the Apollo forces a character within **Sensors** to fall, the Apollo can accelerate the drop, changing the rules for falling damage. When they land, the character takes **1 kinetic AP** for every space fallen, to a maximum of **10 kinetic AP.** They must also make an **Agility** save or take **1d3 kinetic AP** and fall **Prone.**

REDIRECT MOMENTUM

1/round, when the Apollo pushes, pulls, or deals **Knockback** to a character, it can do so in a direction of the Apollo's choice instead of the usual direction.

VARIABLE WEIGHT

The Apollo can jump up to its full **Speed** when jumping horizontally, or twice as high when jumping vertically.

CORE SYSTEM

SINGULARITY DYNAMO

The beating heart of the Apollo is the extralspatial cavity in its core. The space within is subjected to powerful, swirling gravitational energy from which it manipulates external g-forces. On activation, the internally massive space is condensed into a dark bead in the eye of the maelstrom, a gravitic anomaly. What is produced is not quite a black hole, but your foes may not know the difference as they are pulled into the singularity.

Break the Tether
Quick Tech

Choose a character in **Sensors** and line of sight. They must pass a **Systems** save or fly **3 spaces** directly up and become **Immobilized** and float in place until the end of its next turn, though it can still fly or teleport. On its turn, the character can repeat the save as a **protocol** to end the **Immobilized** effect, though if it fails, it flies **3 spaces** up again. When the character loses its **Immobilized** condition, it begins to fall if it is not on the ground or another solid surface. Hostile characters can each be affected **1/scene.**

Black Mass
Active (1 CP), Full Action

Create a gravitational anomaly in a free space within **Sensors** and line of sight, which vanishes at the end of the round. The anomaly is an indestructible **Size 1/2** object that does not cause obstruction and affects gravity within **Burst 5.** Loose objects in the area (as decided by the GM) fall toward it when the anomaly appears and are destroyed if they enter its space. Ranged attacks originating inside the area are made with **+2 Difficulty.** Characters that are inside the area when it appears or that end their turn in it must succeed on a **Hull** save or **fly 3 spaces** toward the anomaly and become **Slowed** until the end of their next turn. Any character that enters the anomaly's space takes **2d6 kinetic damage** and is removed from the battlefield.

When the anomaly vanishes, any characters or objects that were destroyed by the anomaly reappear as a chunk of condensed material on the ground beneath the anomaly. The chunk is an object with **Size** equal to the combined **Size** of the destroyed objects and characters divided by 2 (minimum 1, maximum 5), shunting characters in its space to the nearest free space. Characters removed from the battlefield reappear in a free space of their choice adjacent to the chunk. Characters adjacent to the chunk treat all surfaces of the chunk as flat ground for the purposes of movement, and can move across it normally instead of climbing.

MOUNTS

FLEX MOUNT

HEAVY MOUNT

OPTIONAL FALLING RULES

The original rules for falling in the Lancer Core Rulebook may be insufficient for the amount of falling the Apollo does on a regular basis. For GMs with players planning to play Apollo, consider using this additional rule for falling:

A falling character falls through other characters without stopping. If a character's fall would end in another character's space, it is shunted to the nearest free space of the falling character's choice.

LICENSE I: GRAVITON REGULATOR, IMPACT ABSORBERS

Graviton Regulator
2 SP, 1 Heat (Self), Unique, Quick Action

Choose a willing ally within **Sensors** and line of sight or yourself. The target immediately falls in a direction of your choice, including vertically or any upward diagonal, even in areas with zero gravity and even if the target can fly. Falling in this manner does not count as involuntary movement and triggers reactions normally. The fall ends after a number of spaces equal to your **Speed,** and if the target can't fly and is not on the ground or an object, they fall again in the normal direction at the end of the turn.

When you use this system, you can choose to take **1 heat** to make the target immune to damage from falling until the end of the turn.

By manipulating the standard gravity field, or the lack thereof, any direction can become 'down'. Control of this concept proved challenging at first, resulting in some hilarious - and tragic - incidents. Such is the fate of mankind, who has always dreamed of flight. Falling properly, as it turns out, was the more difficult achievement.

Impact Absorbers
1 SP, Unique

Your mech becomes **Immune** to damage from falling.

The somewhat misleadingly named impact absorbers do not dampen kinetic forces. Instead, the system automatically senses ambient gravity, acceleration, and large bodies of mass in near proximity. On detecting a threat, the internal gravity field is adjusted away from the mass to compensate, rendering falls from high places no more dangerous than a step down a staircase. As a treat, the pilot's cockpit is subjected to a stable, adjustable level of gravity for their comfort, regardless of exterior g-forces.

LICENSE II: APOLLO FRAME, NEUTRON STARDUSTERS, ZERO POINT COLLIDER

Neutron Stardusters
Auxiliary Melee, Knockback 1
[1 Threat] [1d3+1 Kinetic]

On Critical Hit: The attack gains an additional **Knockback 2.**

The true innovation of weapons designed with gravity and extraspatial manipulation in mind was in the shaping of opposing forces. New modes of thinking had to be developed. Could gravity be utilized as a force multiplier for the velocity of hyperdense materials? Of course it could, that is obvious.

However, could a subtle tuning of gravity draw the target toward the heavy payload and meet it en route? Could the heightened impact impart residual gravitic force onto the target? Could a weapon's form and heft be extraspatially compressed into a smaller, sleeker design? Now these questions are worth asking.

Zero-Point Collider
2 SP, Unique, Quick Action

This system charges as a **quick action,** readying a gravitational pulse. The next time in the scene you hit a character with a **melee attack,** they must succeed on a **Systems** save or they begin falling in a direction of your choice, including vertically or any upward diagonal, even in areas with zero gravity and even if the target can fly. The fall ends after **5 spaces,** and if the target can't fly and is not on the ground or an object, they fall again in the normal direction at the end of the turn. A character can only take falling damage once per turn from this system.

- *"We will never forgive this injustice. The clans have a long memory."*
- *"Then you're rejecting our offer?"*
- *"You don't- you're monsters! Children will die without treatment!"*
- *"Then we have our price, and you have yours. Which would you rather pay?"*

LICENSE III: CENTRIPETAL CYCLER, SWORD OF DAMOCLES

Centripetal Cycler
2 SP, Unique, Reaction

Gain the **Orbit** reaction.

Space and mass are delicately contorted and melded into one. Without one or the other, the orbital ring collapses. Such an advanced concept could not have been developed by the Farseers in the brief time they have colonized Beacon. Thus it must have been found whole.

The situation becomes clear. We have only scratched the surface of what Beacon has to offer, and the Annamite clan has been feeding us scraps. We have used too light a hand.

Orbit
Reaction, 1/round, 2 Heat (Self)

Trigger: A **ranged attack** that would deal **kinetic** or **explosive damage** misses you.

Effect: The projectile begins to orbit you. You can have up to 3 projectiles orbiting you at once. While a projectile is orbiting you, if a character ends their turn adjacent to you or enters adjacency for the first time in a round, they must succeed on an **Agility** save or take **1d6 kinetic damage** for each projectile in orbit and you lose all projectiles. If they succeed on the save, you keep your projectiles. You lose all projectiles when the current scene ends.

Sword of Damocles
Heavy Melee, 1 SP, Knockback 2
[2 Threat] [2d6 Kinetic]

Whenever you or another character within **Sensors** would fall at the end of your turn, you can instead have the fall begin instantly as a free action. If you fall on your turn, the weapon gains **+1 Accuracy,** as well as **bonus damage** equal to the amount of spaces you fell (to a maximum of **+3**) until the end of the turn.

Written in the margins on each of the schematics and design drafts the Farseers sent to the Exotic Materials Group were the following lines:

On thread borne high,
the bright blade rests overhead
for the right moment.

SIZE 1

IPS-N NEMO

Support

Early in the Vanishing Era, before the invention of dusklight, humanity struggled to find any viable defensive measures against the Argent Plague. Projected shields, stasis barriers, and other similar technologies saw limited success, but the scale required to protect a starship or station for long periods would drain battery banks dry. Interstellar traffic lanes became no-man's-lands with silvery clouds of nanites marking the spots where traveling ships had met their demise. IPS-N struggled during these dark days, and ultimately arrived at a solution: fight fire with fire.

The Nemo and its self-replicating, directed blackwash was humanity's last line of defense against the Plague. It became standard practice on interstellar ships to employ the model individually or in teams. When sensors detected Plague infection of a ship, the Nemo was deployed to counter it. After dusklight's introduction, the Nemo became a subject of controversy due to its use of blackwash nanites. While its glory has faded, certain galactic travelers with lifespans extended by relativity recall the bygone era in which only the Nemo stood between a ship's crew and a devouring swarm. Their protests forced IPS-N to keep the Nemo in production.

CORE STATS

Size: 1
Armor: 1
HULL
HP: 6
Repair Cap: 5
AGILITY
Evasion: 8
Speed: 5

Save Target: 11
Sensors: 12
SYSTEMS
E-Defense: 10
Tech Attack: +1
SP: 7
ENGINEERING
Heat Cap: 6

TRAITS

STERLING SWARM

3/round, when an object or a mech is destroyed within **Sensors,** the Nemo can use a **reaction** to create a nanomachine swarm in a **free space** within **Range 2** of the target. No more than **6 swarms** can exist at once. You can disperse any number of swarms as a **free action,** removing them from the battlefield.

When a character enters a swarm's space or starts its turn in it, the Nemo can remove the swarm. If the swarm is removed, the character receives one of the following effects of your choice:

- Clear **2 heat.**
- Clear **Impaired, Lock On, Slowed, Shredded,** or all **burn** from characters other than itself.
- The character can spend **1 Repair** as a **quick action** to restore all **HP** before the end of its next turn.
- Treat the character as if they entered **dangerous terrain,** dealing **kinetic damage**.

CORE SYSTEM

SYMPHONY OF SILVER

Nanowashes are separated into different categories based on their lifespan and their reproduction methods. Whitewash nanites are for single-use jobs. Greywash nanites are for sustained use, and are often (though not always) weaponized, targeting biological and/or nonbiological material. Neither whitewash nor greywash nanites self-replicate outside of specific conditions.

Blackwash nanites are doomsday weapons capable of self-replication. The prime example of this is the Argent Plague, which has erased worlds. At the time, the only answer was to fight blackwash with blackwash in a clashing feast for resources. The Nemo's blackwash is a chained wildfire that must be controlled at any cost; after all, nobody wants to unleash a second Argent Plague.

Orchestrate

Protocol, 1 Heat (Self)

The Nemo causes up to **2 swarms** within **Sensors** to move up to **4 spaces.** This movement can pass through characters and objects, and can end in their space.

TRAITS

NANOWEAVE

When the Nemo takes **structure damage,** it can create **2 swarms** in **free spaces** within **Range 2** of itself.

MOUNTS

FLEX MOUNT

MAIN MOUNT

Rising Tide
Active (1 CP), Quick Action

For the rest of the scene, you gain the following benefits:

- At the end of each of your turns, you can create a swarm in a free space within **Sensors.**
- **Orchestrate** now affects an unlimited number of swarms.
- At the end of your turn, swarms deal **10 AP kinetic damage** to objects in their space.

LICENSE I: SALVAGE TROUPE, NETWORK NANOWALL

Salvage Troupe
2 SP, Limited 5, Quick Action

Target **up to 2 objects** within **Sensors** and line of sight to be consumed by nanomachines, expending a charge for each target. At the end of each of your turns, the target takes **10 AP kinetic damage.** When the object is destroyed, it emits a **Burst 1** cloud until the end of your next turn. The cloud is **dangerous terrain,** dealing **kinetic damage,** for hostile characters.

While the Plague was technologically superior and capable of annihilating matter, field testing proved that it could be defeated with overwhelming numbers. On a ship, the bulkheads and compartments themselves become ammunition for a nanowar. Such battles became a race to eradicate the Plague before the ship was devoured between the warring forces.

Network Nanowall
2 SP, Limited 3, Unique, Quick Tech

Expend a charge and choose an ally within line of sight and Sensors. **Tech attacks** against the ally receive **+2 Difficulty** until the end of the scene. When a **tech attack** misses the ally, you can either allow this effect to end, or take **2 heat** to continue the effect. When you allow this effect to end, you and the ally clear **heat** equal to the amount of **tech attacks** that missed the ally while under the effect.

We are helpless by ourselves. Tiny, stupid, alone. However, with some friends, we form a network to share resources. With 10^{25} friends we are no longer helpless, nor stupid. Good friends watch each other's backs. Would you like to be our friend?

LICENSE II: NEMO FRAME, SABOTEUR NANITES, SCATTER NEXUS

Saboteur Nanites
2 SP, Unique

Hostile characters within **Sensors** that would make an **Engineering** check due to **dangerous terrain** must instead make an **Engineering** save against your **Save Target.**

Like any good army, a swarm is held together by its specialists. Hardened metal shells take time to dismantle. That's why you send in saboteur nanites to soften up a target, using microbursts of energy to preheat it and weaken its structure before the swarm cuts in like hot a knife through butter.

Scatter Nexus
Auxiliary Nexus, Smart, Loading, 1 Heat (Self)
[Range 8][1 Kinetic + 1d3 Burn]

More like a shotgun than a nanite dispersal tool, the scatter nexus delivers payloads of numerous gel beads. The gel acts as a cushion for the nanites riding inside. On impact, the hungry little troopers get to work.

Blackwash Flood

3 SP, Limited 2, Full Action

You unleash a nanite flood, creating a **Blast 2** area within line of sight and Sensors. The flood is **dangerous terrain,** dealing **kinetic damage,** for hostile characters. As a **protocol,** you can cause the flood to spread to spaces adjacent to its area, extending it on any edge, including spaces added in the same turn. The amount of spaces you can add equals 1 + the amount of applicable items below:

- A hostile character is in the flood.
- You or an ally are in the flood.
- An object is in the flood. The object takes **10 AP kinetic damage** when this item is applied.
- A character in the flood was attacked since the start of your previous turn.

Each item can only be applied once per round.

You can use a **quick action** to disperse the flood. When you do so, the following effects occur:

- Allies in the flood gain **Resistance** to **damage** and **burn** until the end of their next turn.
- Hostile characters in the flood must succeed on an **Engineering** save or become **Shredded** until the end of their next turn.

During the darkest days of the Vanishing Era, a superstition arose about those devoured by the Argent Plague. It was said that their souls were devoured with their bodies, the spirit atomized and distributed amongst the swarm, becoming a part of it. On many starships, it became the unspoken responsibility of the defensive swarm controller to consume the crew if the ship would be lost to infection, rather than let the Plague have them.

D-Integrator Nexus

Main Nexus, 1 SP, Smart, 1 Heat (Self)
[Range 10][1 Kinetic + 3 Burn]

Against objects, this weapon gains **+1 Accuracy** and deals **10 AP kinetic damage.**

On Critical Hit: Deal **double damage** to objects. Additionally, deal **10 AP kinetic damage** to an object within **Range 3** of the target.

An internal reservoir hooks up to a powerful hydraulic pump. When activated, this tools ejects a coating stream of nanites. The firehose-like pressure washes the Plague away while coating high priority resources with a friendly swarm, ready to dismantle and repurpose it.

SIZE 2

HA
SCIPIO

Artillery

After the death of Dr. Sarah Lumen, the Union burned with rebellion. In his fury, Pendragon called for a Second Luminous Crusade to overthrow the Third Committee, and the people's response was deafening. During one of many skirmishes, a Crusader battlegroup of Union revolutionaries commanded by Pendragon pursued the fleeing remnants of a Union loyalist battlegroup. As their damaged ships failed, the loyalists crash landed on Gutton, the moon of a gas giant. With just enough atmosphere to support lichen and other small lifeforms, Gutton had been marked for future development by Harrison Armory.

The loyalists discovered a cache of ancient but operational prototype mechs that had been sealed and forgotten in the tumult of the Hercynian Crisis. The Scipio was originally slated for deployment on Hercynia as part of the ongoing TBK process. Instead, they were utilized to scorch the earth and scar the world in a war between brothers. After the last loyalists were finally hunted down, the once hopeful Gutton had become a tomb world, its surface stained with radiation and bereft of life.

CORE STATS

Size: 2
Armor: 1

HULL
HP: 8
Repair Cap: 4

AGILITY
Evasion: 7
Speed: 3

Save Target: 11
Sensors: 10

SYSTEMS
E-Defense: 6
Tech Attack: -2
SP: 6

ENGINEERING
Heat Cap: 7

TRAITS

CHAIN REACTION

When the Scipio takes **stress damage,** all of its attacks, talents, and systems that create a **Blast** or **Burst** have their size increased by one increment (e.g. **Blast 2** becomes **Blast 3**) until the end of your next turn. If it takes **stress damage** on your turn, this effect instead ends at the end of the current turn.

MOLTEN REACTOR

While resting, the Scipio can be repaired at a rate of **1 Repair** per **1 stress damage,** instead of **2 Repairs.**

RADIOACTIVE

While the Scipio is in the **Danger Zone, Biological** characters that start their turn adjacent to the Scipio must succeed on a **Hull** save or become **Impaired** until the end of their next turn.

MOUNTS

MAIN MOUNT | MAIN MOUNT | HEAVY MOUNT

CORE SYSTEM

QUANTUM ENTANGLER

At the heart of Scipio's design is a highly experimental nuclear reactor adapted from early forays into blink gate development. This engine introduces uncertainty into the nature of the chassis and the pilot that results in a parallel existence, a paradox destined for catastrophic collapse. Pilots of the Scipio frequently display the symptoms of psychosis and dissociative identity disorder.

FALLOUT

1/round, when the Scipio attacks with a **Blast, Burst,** or **Cone** weapon while in the **Danger Zone,** it leaves clouds of radioactive waste. After the attack resolves, place a cloud in **1 free space** within the affected area if the attack was a **Skirmish,** or 2 free spaces if the attack was part of a **Barrage.** When a character enters a cloud, they take **2 heat** and the cloud vanishes.

Unstable Fission

Active (1 CP), Protocol

Create a copy of yourself (including a copy of the pilot if they were inside the mech) in a free space within **Sensors** and line of sight. Treat the copy as its own mech character that you control, tracking its statistics and conditions separately, and having it take its own turn.

At the end of the round, flip a coin to determine which of your two mechs is unstable. The unstable mech instantly suffers a reactor meltdown if it hasn't already been destroyed, and if a copy of the pilot was created, the unstable pilot is vaporized wherever they are.

LICENSE I: CATALYST CHARGES, VOLATILITY DRIVER

Catalyst Charges
2 SP, Limited 2, Unique, 1 Heat (Self)

Expend a charge for one of the following effects:

- **Catalyst Grenade** (*Grenade*, **Range 5, Blast 1**): All characters within the affected area must pass an **Engineering** save or take **2 heat.** On a success, they take **1 heat.** Any mines within the affected area will trigger, and if they create a **Burst,** then their size is increased by one increment (e.g. **Burst 1** becomes **Burst 2).**
- **Catalyst Mine** (**Mine, Burst 1**): All characters within the affected area must pass an **Engineering** save or take **4 heat.** On a success, they take **2 heat.** Any other mines within the affected area will trigger, and if they create a **Burst,** then their size is increased by one increment (e.g. **Burst 1** becomes **Burst 2**).

In the midst of the Battle of Gutton, the Crusaders found themselves forced to march through minefields in pursuit of Union forces. After the first mistakes, progress ground to a halt. One wrong misstep was akin to throwing a lit match into a crate of dynamite. While the catalyst charges could not be tested on Hercynia as originally planned, the Think Tank could not ask for a more thorough field test.

Volatility Driver
Main Cannon, Knockback 1, Loading, 1 Heat (Self)
[Range 15] [Blast 1] [1d6+1 Explosive]

On Critical Hit: If your target has the **Mech** tag, increase the **Blast** by one increment (e.g. **Blast** 1 becomes **Blast 2**), rolling attacks against additional targets in the larger **Blast.** Each additional critical hit triggers this effect again, to a maximum of **Blast 4.**

One of the Think Tank's more abstruse creations began as a thought experiment. Could the Armory leverage the difference between their own superior cold fusion reactors vs. an inferior opponent? The result was only a mixed success. The volatility driver weaponized excess leakage from reactors as a force multiplier. However, a reactor's quality was irrelevant in the resultant escalating chain reaction. Under its reign, all are treated equally.

LICENSE II: SCIPIO FRAME, DISCHARGE REACTOR, FIRE FOR EFFECT

Discharge Reactor
2 SP, Unique, Quick Action

You immediately take **1 stress damage** and reload your **Loading** weapons. Do not make an **overheating check,** though you still suffer the usual effects of reaching **0 Stress.** You also choose one of the following effects:

- Clear all **heat.**
- Set your **heat** equal to half your **Heat Cap,** putting you in the **Danger Zone.** Characters within **Burst 2** must succeed on an **Engineering** save or take **heat** equal to ¼ your **Heat Cap.**

The Think Tank theorized that by using fluid for both fuel and coolant in a reactor, a pilot would have greater control over its thermodynamics. In the case of an imminent overflow, the chassis could void the boiling, radioactive froth. Out of consideration for the environment, this technology is only authorized for use outside the Armory's Purview.

Fire for Effect
2 SP, Limited 3, Unique, 2 Heat (Self)

After you make a **Line, Cone, Burst,** or **Blast** pattern as part of an attack, you can make the area **difficult terrain** until the end of your next turn.

"I know this isn't what you would have wanted. I'm no idiot, just a fool. I've realized that I'm not doing this for you, but for myself. For my pride. For the light that left my life with you."
- Unattributed log from the Battle of Gutton.

LICENSE III: CLUSTER CASTER, FRIEND-OR-FOE SHAPING

Cluster Caster
Heavy Cannon, Arcing, 2 Heat (Self)
[Range 20] [Blast 1] [1d6+3 Explosive]

When you attack with this weapon, you can overload it to make it **Blast 2,** and the affected area becomes **dangerous terrain** until the end of your next turn, dealing **explosive damage.** The weapon must then be reloaded before it can be used again as if it had the **Loading** tag.

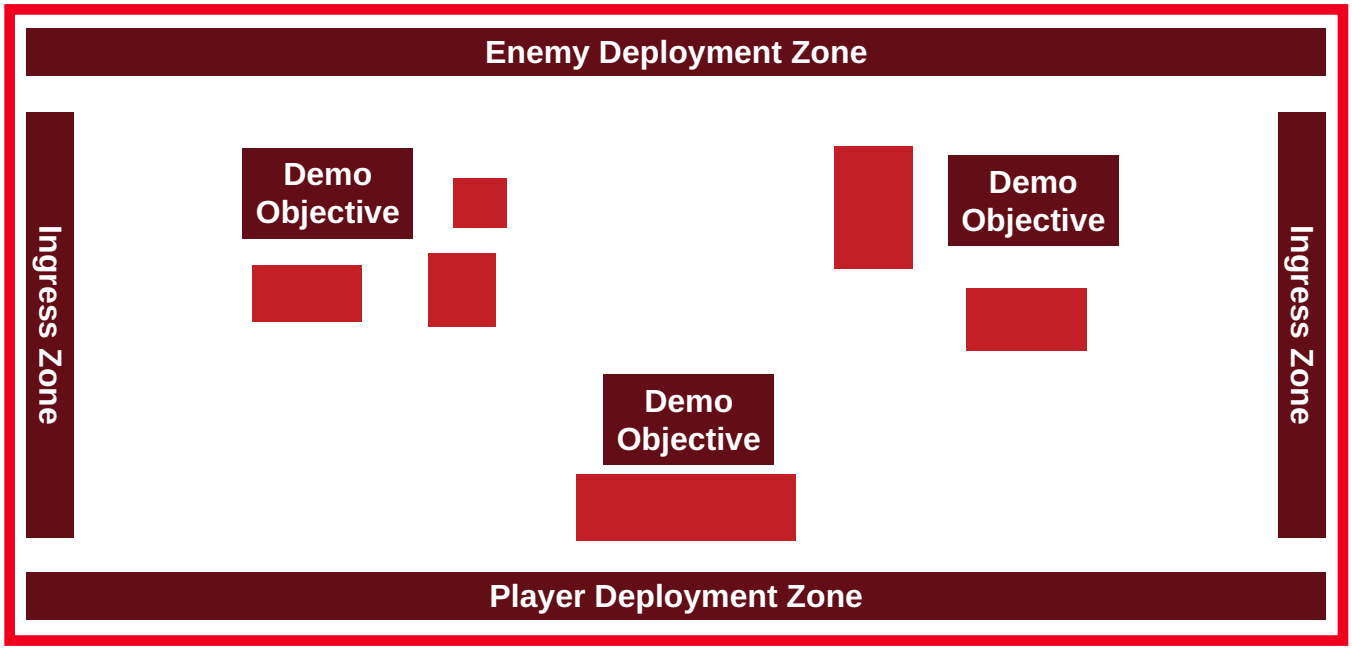
The Armory's state of the art cluster munitions have a failure rate of %1. Given the cluster caster discharges 480 bomblets per payload, this results in an average of 4.8 unexploded bomblets. Testing shows that only 12% of this unexploded ordnance is at risk of rearming and damaging unintended targets. These figures are well within the legal parameters of munitions standards for most of civilized space.

Friend-or-Foe Shaping
3 SP, Unique

Allies have **Resistance** to damage you deal with attacks and saving throws. When you would roll to attack an ally, you can instead take **2 heat** to have the attack automatically miss.

Pendragon was designed for research, not tactics. Still, he showed great aptitude for military command. He considered connections, relationships, correlation, and causation to formulate grand strategies that overwhelmed opponents. When he was delivered the casualty report for the Battle of Gutton, he spent 5 hours and 47 minutes in silence, calculating the toll. After an unscheduled cycling, Pendragon ordered the battlegroup to prepare for the next push into loyalist space.

NEW SITREP: DEMOLITION



1. Within healing halls darkened by blight,
2. Hid faithful who prayed within Her light,
3. 'Neath crimson shelter of painted giftblood,
4. The world beyond claimed by silver flood.

5. Then heroes knew divine inspiration,
6. Took cure upon cure, seeking salvation.
7. They marched to war, a flickering flame,
8. To drive away null in the Doctor's name.

– Unattributed psalm posted across dozens of Omninet forums, circa 5405u.

Demolition missions involve destroying several designated objectives. These targets will typically be strategically important critical infrastructure or defensive systems.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

- **PC Victory:** All demolition objectives have been destroyed. The scene ends at the end of the round.
- **PC Defeat:** Not all demolition objectives were destroyed by the end of the 6th round.

DEMOLITION OBJECTIVES

The demolition objectives are two to five objects with the following statistics:

- **Size 1, 2,** or **3.**
- **1** or **2 Armor.**
- **Evasion 5** and **E-Defense 5.**
- **HP:** Multiply the number of PCs by **20/25/30,** then divide the result by the amount of demolition objects in the scene. For example, with four PCs and five Tier 2 demolition objectives, each objective will have **20 HP.**

ENEMY FORCES

The GM should prepare about one and a half times the enemy forces that they would normally use. About two-thirds of these forces should be deployed and the rest held as **Reinforcements.**

DEPLOYMENT

The PCs deploy first, choosing positions for their characters in the **ADZ;** then, the GM deploys enemy forces in the **EDZ.** The demolition objectives should be spread through the battlefield, preferably behind cover.

REINFORCEMENTS

At the start of any round, the GM may deploy 1 NPC (or up to 4 grunts) in any of the **IZs.** They can't deploy in the same **IZ** twice in a row.

SIZE 1

DUELIST

Defender

The noble houses of the Annorum are rife with drama and accusations. 'You've violated the agreement!' 'You've bankrupted me!' 'You slept with my sister AND my brother!' Such allegations require proof… but when the facts are uncertain, there are other methods for determining right and wrong.

'Enough! Prove the truth of your words with your blade, or keep them to yourself, cur!'

The best and the most fancily clad duelists tend to ply their trade within the Pankration Mekani, a popular gladiatorial sport in Annorum space. There, flashing silver blades cross and counter, as persuasive as any artful linguist. Proving someone else wrong is sweet, but bodily trouncing your foe at the same time is sweeter still.

TIER 1		TIER 2		TIER 3	
MECH SKILLS		**MECH SKILLS**		**MECH SKILLS**	
Hull: +1	**Systems:** -1	**Hull:** +2	**Systems:** -1	**Hull:** +3	**Systems:** -1
Agility: +2	**Engineering:** 0	**Agility:** +4	**Engineering:** +1	**Agility:** +6	**Engineering:** +1
CORE STATS		**CORE STATS**		**CORE STATS**	
HP: 14	**Armor:** 1	**HP:** 16	**Armor:** 1	**HP:** 18	**Armor:** 1
Evasion: 12	**E-Defense:** 10	**Evasion:** 15	**E-Defense:** 11	**Evasion:** 18	**E-Defense:** 12
Speed: 5	**Size:** 1	**Speed:** 5	**Size:** 1	**Speed:** 6	**Size:** 1
Heat Cap: 7	**Save Target:** 11	**Heat Cap:** 7	**Save Target:** 13	**Heat Cap:** 7	**Save Target:** 15
Sensors: 10		**Sensors:** 10		**Sensors:** 10	

TACTICS

Duelists are not as durable as most defenders, but they make up for it with speed and style. Between high **Evasion** and the potential of **Impaired** from **Flashing Steel,** the Duelist can be difficult to nail down. They protect others by challenging foes to duels that encourage one-on-one combat and by staying mobile to **Deflect** incoming attacks on allies.

BASE SYSTEMS

Flashing Steel

Main Melee, Reliable 2/3/4, +2/+4/+6
[Threat 2][6/8/10 Kinetic]

This weapon gains **+1 Accuracy** to its next attack when an attack misses the Duelist. This effect doesn't stack with itself.

On Critical Hit: The target becomes **Impaired** until the end of their next turn.

Deflect

Reaction, 1/round

Trigger: An ally within **Range 4** and line of sight is targeted by a **ranged** or **melee attack.**

Effect: The Duelist moves spaces equal to its **Speed** toward the ally, ignoring reactions and engagement. If the Duelist ends the move adjacent to the target, the target gains **Resistance** to **all damage** dealt by the attack.

Challenge

System, Quick Action

The Duelist challenges a hostile character within **Range 10** and line of sight, which the target must accept or refuse. If they refuse, the target has **+2 Difficulty** to attacks, checks, and saves until the end of their next turn. If they accept, then while they are within **Range 10** of each other, the Duelist and the target are dueling.

Dueling characters deal and receive **half damage, heat,** and **burn** to/from characters that are not part of their duel. The duel ends when one of the dueling characters is destroyed, when the Duelist uses this trait again, or when the scene ends.

OPTIONAL SYSTEMS

Affair of Honor
Reaction, 1/round

Trigger: The other character in a duel attacks any character other than the Duelist.

Effect: The Duelist attacks the inciting character with **Overwatch.**

Boast
Reaction, 1/round

Trigger: The other character in the duel ends their turn without either hitting the Duelist with an attack or having the Duelist fail a save during the turn.

Effect: The character takes **2/3/4 heat.**

Crossfire Pistol
Main Cannon, Loading, +1/+2/+3
[Range 10][8/11/14 Kinetic]

This weapon automatically reloads when the other character in a duel attacks any character other than the Duelist. Attacks with this weapon at its maximum **Range** deal **1d6 bonus damage.**

Crowd-Surf
System, Recharge 5+, Quick Action

The Duelist moves up to **3 spaces** while passing through characters, ignoring reactions and engagement. If this movement ends inside a character's space, it can repeat the movement. Hostile characters the Duelist passes through must succeed on an **Agility** save or take **3/4/5 kinetic damage.**

FACE ME!
System, Recharge 5+, Quick Action

A character within **Sensors** and line of sight must succeed on a **Systems** save or be unable to voluntarily move away from the Duelist until the end of their next turn. The Duelist can then move up to its **Speed** toward the target, ignoring reactions and engagement.

MATCHING SPEED — Trait

All attacks that target the Duelist, with the exception of the first attack in each round, receive **+1 Difficulty.**

SIZE 1/2

PREDATOR

Biological

SIZE 2

Mankind has long dominated the wild frontiers of the Milk Way, sitting atop the food chain. Of course, this fact of life is only true in the grand scheme of things. In truth, humans are small, fragile creatures, with only the barriers of civilization and technology to keep them safe from things that lurk in the dark corners of the world. Should they dare to tread in a predator's territory, humanity may discover that the struggle for supremacy has not yet been decided.

TIER 1	TIER 2	TIER 3
MECH SKILLS	**MECH SKILLS**	**MECH SKILLS**
Hull: +2 **Systems:** -3	**Hull:** +3 **Systems:** -3	**Hull:** +4 **Systems:** -3
Agility: +3 **Engineering:** -1	**Agility:** +4 **Engineering:** +0	**Agility:** +6 **Engineering:** +1
CORE STATS	**CORE STATS**	**CORE STATS**
HP: 15 **Armor:** 1	**HP:** 17 **Armor:** 1	**HP:** 20 **Armor:** 1
Evasion: 10 **E-Defense:** 8	**Evasion:** 12 **E-Defense:** 8	**Evasion:** 15 **E-Defense:** 8
Speed: 5 **Size:** 1/2, 1, 2	**Speed:** 5 **Size:** 1/2, 1, 2	**Speed:** 6 **Size:** 1/2, 1, 2
Sensors: 10 **Save Target:** 11	**Sensors:** 10 **Save Target:** 13	**Sensors:** 10 **Save Target:** 16

PREDATORS AND MONSTROSITIES

The Predator is designed as a supplement to the **Monstrosity** of the *Lancer Core Rulebook,* with additional attack options from its **Natural Weapons** and features from its **Predator Evolutions.** The Predator can pull freely from the **Optional Mutations** of the Monstrosity, and the Monstrosity can likewise use the Predator's features.

BASE SYSTEM

UNIQUE PHYSIOLOGY Trait

If the Predator has **Structure** (because it is an **Elite** or **Ultra,** for example), it rolls on the **Monstrosity Structure Damage** table from the *Lancer Core Rulebook* (pg. 324) when it takes **structure damage.**

APEX BEAST Trait

The Predator chooses one or two options from the **Natural Weapons** list. It also chooses at least one option from the **Predator Evolutions and Traits** list or from the Monstrosity's **Optional Mutations** list from the *Lancer Core Rulebook* (pg. 325).

NATURAL WEAPONS

Constrict
+1/+2/+3, +1 Accuracy
[Threat 1][4/6/8 Kinetic]

On Hit: The target must succeed on a **Hull** save or be **Grappled.**

Frenzy
+2/+4/+6 [Burst 1][5/7/9 Kinetic]

Feint and Lunge
+2/+4/+6 [Threat 2][4/6/8 Kinetic]

This weapon can make **2/3/4** attacks at a time, targeting either the same character or different ones. The Predator can move **1 space** after each attack, ignoring reactions and engagement.

Icy Fangs
+1/+2/+3, +1 Accuracy
[Threat 1][4/6/8 Energy]

On Hit: The target is **Slowed** and clears **1/2/3 heat.** For each **heat** cleared, the target takes an additional **2 energy damage.**

Molten Maw
+1/+2/+3, +1 Accuracy
[Threat 1][4/6/8 Burn + 1/2/3 Heat]

Primal Hunt
+1/+2/+3, +1 Accuracy
[Range 10][4/6/8 Energy]

On Hit: The target suffers one of the following effects (chosen when creating the Predator):

- **Caustic:** Half the damage of the attack is **energy** and half becomes **burn.**
- **Concussive:** This weapon's damage becomes **explosive.** The target must succeed on a **Hull** save or be **pushed 3 spaces** away from the Predator. If a character moved by this attack collides with an obstruction, they take **2/3/4 kinetic damage.**
- **Frigid:** The target clears **1/2/3 heat,** taking an additional **2 energy damage** for each **heat** cleared.
- **Lightning:** A hostile character within **Range 3** of the target takes **2/3/4 energy damage.**
- **Thermal:** Targets take **1/2/3 heat.**

Rip and Tear
+2/+4/+6 [Threat 1][6 Kinetic]

At T2, this weapon can make two attacks at a time, targeting either the same character or two different ones. At T3, it can make three attacks at a time.

Skewer Prey
+1/+2/+3 [Range 8][5/7/9 Kinetic]

On Hit: The target must succeed on an **Engineering** save or be **Slowed** until the end of their next turn**.**

Tail Sweep
+1/+2/+3, +1 Accuracy
[Range 3][4/6/8 Kinetic]

On Hit: The target must succeed on an **Agility** save or fall **Prone.**

PREDATOR EVOLUTIONS

BLOATED — Trait

Boosting becomes a **full action** for the Predator instead of a **quick action.** When the Predator is destroyed, it explodes in a **Burst 1.** Characters in the area must succeed on an **Agility** save or take **3/4/5 explosive damage.** Additionally, **1d3 Grunts** (of the GM's choice) are placed onto the battlefield adjacent to the Predator's wreck. The **Grunts** do not get a turn until the next round.

CYBERNETIC ENHANCEMENTS — Trait

The Predator loses the **Biological** tag and gains a **Heat Cap** of **6.** The Predator gains access to one **melee or ranged weapon,** or one **system** from another non-biological NPC class's base or optional systems.

HAZARDOUS BREATH — Trait
Recharge 5+

The Predator unleashes its breath in a **Cone 5.** Characters in this area must succeed on an **Agility** save or take **4/6/8 energy damage** and suffer one of the following effects (chosen when creating the Predator):

- **Caustic:** Half the damage of the breath is **energy** and half becomes **burn.**
- **Concussive:** Instead of taking **energy** from the breath, targets take **explosive.** Targets are **pushed 2 spaces** away from the Predator and fall **Prone.**
- **Frigid:** Targets are **Slowed** and clear **1/2/3 heat.** The breath deals an additional **2 energy damage** for each **heat** cleared.
- **Lightning:** Instead of a Cone, this breath targets a character in **Range 8.** It can then leap from one target to another, so long as the next target is within **Range 3** of the previous target. Characters can't be targeted more than once with the same usage of **Hazardous Breath.**
- **Thermal:** Targets take **2/3/4 heat.**

On a successful save, targets take **half damage** and avoid additional effects.

HURL AWAY — Trait
Quick Action

The Predator ends a **Grapple,** pushing the other character **4 spaces** and they must succeed on a **Hull** save or take **3/4/6 kinetic damage** and fall **Prone.** On a success, they take **half damage.** If the character collides with another character, they must also make the save or suffer the effects.

Marking Pheromones
Reaction, 1/round, Trait

Trigger: An adjacent enemy hits the Predator with a **melee or ranged attack.**

Effect: The attacker receives **Lock On.** An ally can consume this **Lock On** as a free action on their turn to move up to its **Speed** toward the target, ignoring reactions and engagement. If it does so, until the end of the turn, the ally's next attack against the target gains **+1 Accuracy.**

ODD METABOLISM
Trait
Quick Action

The Predator removes an adjacent wreck or allied **Grunt** and regains half its **HP.** The first time it does this in a scene, it also gains **+1 Accuracy** to attacks, checks, and saves until the end of the scene.

POUNCE
Trait
Recharge 5+, Quick Action

The Predator moves spaces up to its **Speed** in a straight line, ignoring reactions and engagement. The Predator can pass through - but not stop in - spaces occupied by other characters. Characters that the Predator moved through get pushed **2 spaces** in a direction of the Predator's choice. If the Predator attacks immediately after this movement, it gains **+2 Accuracy.**

SPIN WEB
Trait
Recharge 6, Quick Action

The Predator sets up sticky webbing up to **3 spaces high** and up to **6 spaces** long starting within **Range 5.** All spaces must be free, and both ends must be attached to an adjacent surface, such as a wall, floor, or object.

When hostile characters cross the space occupied by the line for the first time in a round or start their turn within one, they must succeed on an **Agility** save or become **Immobilized** until the end of their next turn**.**

The web is an object with **10 HP** and **Evasion 8,** and **Resistance** to **kinetic** and **explosive damage.** Any character in or adjacent to the line can tear the web down by succeeding on a **Hull** check as a **full action.**

SWARM
Trait

The Predator is a swarm of smaller Predators. Its **Size** is **2** and it gains **+5 HP**. It has **Resistance** to all damage from attacks that aren't **Line, Cone, Blast,** or **Burst** and it is **Immune** to **Grapple, Ram, Kockback,** and **Stunned.** The Predator deals **half damage, heat,** and **burn** while it is below half **HP.** It can't regain **HP,** nor can it ever gain **Structure or Stress.**

VENGEFUL RAGE
Trait, 1/round

1/round, if an ally is destroyed within **Range 5,** the Predator can make a **melee attack** on its next turn as a **free action.**

NEW TEMPLATES

SPECIALIST

Any good military (or any group playing at war) is rife with specialists in its ranks. Battle is a big, complicated business, and everyone needs to play their part. These experts act as a force multiplier by carving their own niche and covering gaps left by their allies.

Use the Specialist template as an alternative (or in addition) to the **Veteran** template. With it, characters can gain capabilities normally beyond their class, or specialize further into a specific role.

TEMPLATE FEATURES

REINFORCED — Template Feature

The Specialist gains **+1 Structure** and **+1 Stress.**

SPECIALIST TRAITS — Template Feature

The Specialist chooses one or two options from the **Specialist Traits** list.

SPECIALIST TRAITS

ARTILLERIST — Trait

Choose one of the Specialist's **ranged weapons** that does not attack in a **Cone, Line,** or **Burst** pattern. It becomes **Blast 1** and **Ordnance.** If it was already **Blast 1,** it becomes **Blast 2. Ranged and melee attacks** against the Specialist have **+1 Accuracy** within **Range 3.**

AVIATOR — Trait

The Specialist can **fly** whenever it moves or **Boosts.**

BRAWLER — Trait

The Specialist gains **+1 Accuracy** to **melee attacks**, but **ranged attacks** are made with **+1 Accuracy** against it. The Specialist gains one **melee weapon** from another NPC class's base or optional systems.

LINEBREAKER — Trait

The Specialist's melee and ranged weapons gain **Knockback 2,** and all of the Specialist's **Knockback** pushes its target in a straight line in a direction of the Specialist's choice.

MARTIAL ARTIST — Trait

The Specialist gains **+1 Accuracy** to **Grapple**, **Ram,** and **Improvised Attack.** While grappling, the Specialist has hard cover. **Improvised Attack** is now a **quick action.**

MARKSMAN — Trait

The Specialist gains **+1 Accuracy** to **ranged attacks**, but **melee attacks** are made with **+1 Accuracy** against it. The Specialist gains one **ranged weapon** from another NPC class's base or optional systems.

Protector
Reaction, 1/round, Trait

Trigger: An ally within **Range 5** and line of sight is targeted by a **ranged or melee attack.**

Effect: The Specialist moves up to its **Speed** toward the ally. This movement ignores engagement and does not provoke reactions. If they end the move adjacent to the target, the Specialist becomes the target of the attack instead.

RIVAL — Trait

Before combat begins, the GM chooses a hostile character; others shall not interfere in their duel. While within **Range 10** of each other, the Specialist and the chosen character are dueling. Dueling characters deal and receive **half damage, heat,** and **burn** to/from characters that are not part of their duel. The duel ends when one of the dueling characters is destroyed.

SURVIVOR — Trait

When the Specialist is destroyed, the pilot automatically ejects, flying to an empty space within **Range 6.** This movement ignores engagement and does not provoke reactions. If the pilot reaches the edge of the combat map, they escape and are removed from the battlefield.

TITAN — Trait

The Specialist's **Size** is set to **3** and its **HP** increases by **5.** It can't be pushed, pulled, knocked **Prone,** or knocked back by smaller characters.

TRACKER — Trait, 1/round

1/round, the Specialist can **Lock-on** or **Search** as a **free action.** The Specialist's weapons gain **Smart** and **Seeking.**

TECHIE — Trait

The Specialist gains **+1 Accuracy** to **tech attacks** but its **melee** and **ranged attacks** gain **+1 Difficulty.** The Specialist gains one **Quick Tech** from another NPC class's base or optional systems.

NEW RESERVES

Blinkjump Engine	Once per mission, you can teleport to any location in **Range 50.** After you've used this ability, you can teleport when you move or **Boost** until the end of the scene. When you make the initial teleport, roll **1d100.** On a **1,** you are removed from the scene.
Gravity Generator	Once per mission, you can activate the generator as a **protocol** until the end of the scene. While the generator is active, you are immune to falling damage, and **1/round** as a **quick action** you can immediately fall in a direction of your choice, including vertically or any upward diagonal, even in areas with zero gravity. Falling in this manner does not count as involuntary movement and triggers reactions normally. The fall ends after **6 spaces,** and if you can't fly and are not on the ground or an object, you fall again in the normal direction at the end of the turn.
Camou-Skin	Once per mission, you can use a **quick action** to become **Invisible** until the end of the scene. You cease being **Invisible** if you take **structure** or **stress damage.**
Blink Battery	Once per mission, you can use a **protocol** to become **Exposed** until the end of your next turn and regain **1 Core Power.** Until the end of the scene, you receive the following effects: • Your **melee** and **ranged attacks** deal **energy damage** instead of **kinetic** or **explosive damage.** • 1/round, you can deal **+2 heat** on a hit with a **ranged** or **melee attack.** • If you suffer a reactor meltdown before the end of the scene, instead of the usual effects, you explode in a **Burst 3** and characters within the area must succeed on an **Agility** save or take **6d6 energy** damage and **4 heat.** On a success, they take half **damage** and **heat.**
Data Spike	The data spike can be thrown like a javelin as a **quick action** at a character within **Range 8** and line of sight. Make a **ranged attack roll** against the target with **+1 Accuracy.** On a hit, the target takes **2d6+2 kinetic damage** and is **Jammed** and **Impaired** until the end of their next turn, and the data spike is consumed. On a miss, the spike comes to rest in a space adjacent to the target where it can be retrieved as a **free action** and used again. Alternatively, it could be used in narrative play to disable the normal functioning of a network or system on the scale of a capital ship. To do so, the spike must be jammed into a major network node on the system.

NEW EXOTIC GEAR

Acheron's Call

2 SP, Unique, Exotic Gear

When you make an **overheating check** or a **structure damage check,** add together the result of all dice you rolled. You may immediately **teleport** to a free space within an amount of spaces equal **3 + the result total.** For example, if you rolled a 3 and a 4 on a **structure damage check,** you could **teleport** up to 10 spaces away.

A fragment of the Idaeans' key to safety from the Titans. The rest was purged to ensure they would not be followed.